

PS3
PlayStation 3PSP
PlayStation Portable

PlayStation 2



PlayStation Network

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

APRIL ISSUE 2010
100% Australian Content
36 GAMES INSIDE!

- Majin: The Fallen Realm
- Super Street Fighter IV
- Fallout: New Vegas
- Clash of the Titans
- Just Cause 2
- LA Noire
- Yakuza 3
- WRC
- MAG

EXPOSED!

BLACK IS BACK

Bodycount: The creator of Black returns with a vengeance!

VERDICT!

FINAL FANTASY XIII

Does it live up to the hype?

FIRST AUSSIE REVIEW!

GOD OF WAR III

A titanic orgy of blades and babes you just can't miss!

UNLEASHED!

BARKING MAD

Kane & Lynch 2:
Old dogs, new tricks!

REVIEWED!

BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

Has Modern Warfare met its match?

REVEALED!

GTA: EPISODES FROM LIBERTY CITY

The boys are back in town!

ISSUE 42 APRIL 2010

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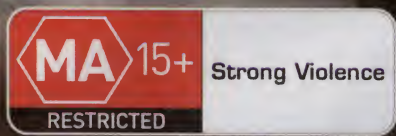
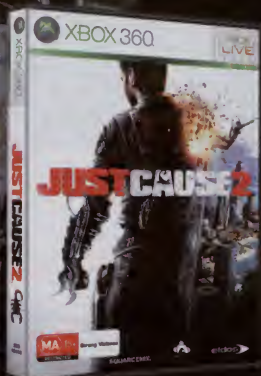
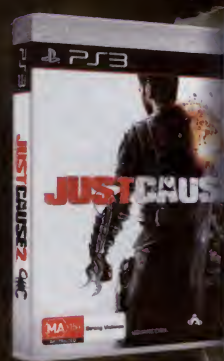
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IS THAT ALL



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BODYCOUNT

The first glimpse at the new shooter from the man who created *Black*. Double-time it to page 48, soldier!

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The Greek shall inherit the earth

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Can it trump *Modern Warfare* at its own game?

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7 THINGS...

...that you must do in *Aliens vs. Predator*. We're not gonna lie to you, there's blood on page 83.

REVIEWS



60 GOD OF WAR III

The chrome dome who pre-dates Rome returns, and he's more pissed off than ever.



64 FINAL FANTASY XIII

Squenix gobsmacks us with preeminence and effeminence in this amazing sequel.



68 BAD COMPANY 2

Explosions: is there any orphanage, accordion factory or mime school they *can't* destroy?



70 YAKUZA 3

We lip the rid off of *Yakuza 3* and get thoroughly lost in its translation.



71 TONY HAWK RIDE

We very nearly killed ourselves trying to do a 'McTwist Christ Air' on this peripheral. Fact.



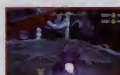
72 MAG

It's the king of MMOFPS. Just try saying that acronym without sounding like a douche-nozzle.



74 BLAZBLUE

Amazing fighter. If you understand the story you deserve 10 respect points and a straight-jacket



76 S&S ALL-STARS RACING

If Sonic is super fast - why does he need a car? We have no answers for you here.



76 RESONANCE OF FATE

Releasing an RPG a week after *Final Fantasy XIII*: Bold or stupid?



77 SILENT HILL

Calling this place 'Silent Hill' is like calling Chernobyl 'Fertility Field'.



77 PUZZLE CHRONICLES

The verdict on this bright new PSP blockbuster. Get it? Sigh...



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JUST CAUSE 2 POSTERS
2x BOOST MOBILE
PRIZE PACKS
5x FINAL FANTASY XIII
PRIZE PACKS



Roleplaying
and impractical
clothing aplenty!
**FINAL FANTASY
XIII**

64

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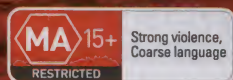
AND SAVE 50% OFF THE REGULAR COVER PRICE! SEE PAGE 30!

BECOME KAZUMA...



OUT NOW

Raised in an orphanage in Tokyo before becoming one of the most revered gangsters in the Japanese underworld, Kazuma is now a changed man living in Okinawa. He is soon dragged back into his sordid past in order to protect those he loves.



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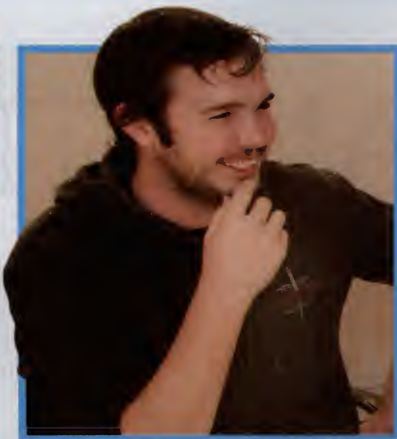
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SHOUT OUTS: KJR :: Vinnie :: Nicole :: Luke Mathew :: Lucy :: MJ :: AC/DC :: Vispi Bhopti is coming out of the walls :: E :: Squeegie :: Hoops and his big UFC day out



LUKE REILLY
EDITOR

PSN:

Capt_Flashheart



PLAYING:

BAD COMPANY 2



WANTING:

GRAN TURISMO

5, RED DEAD

REDEMPTION

WELCOME!

It was highly controversial. Community leaders and politicians were instantly appalled. It was accused of glamorising crime and glorifying violence against police officers. It was banned, briefly, but it was extremely successful. The Australian public loved it.

And it wasn't a *GTA* game.

It was *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, the 1906 silent movie generally regarded as the world's first feature-film.

It's no surprise there are still people who thoroughly oppose videogame violence. They're scared of it. Movies, hard

rock, the Internet - they've all taken their lumps from critics throughout the decades. What consistently confuses me is that these are the same people who thoroughly oppose regulating it.

One anti-R18+ website (that spells violent 'volient') proclaims the following: "[T]he Rudd government has released a discussion paper to gauge whether the Australian community wants R18+ games to be permitted. The 16 page Discussion Paper gives arguments for both sides. **However, once you start 'discussing' a topic you open up the way for the law to be changed!**"

The bold text is theirs. Not only do they want to prevent us properly classifying mature videogames, they don't even want us discussing the matter. This "group of concerned Australian (sic.) who do not want to see the the (sic.) profits of larger video game companies be put before our children" have declared themselves the thought police. And they can't even spell.

I'm glad only 11 people in the country agree with them.

Whe Reilly

OPS ON: WHAT SCARES US



STEPHANIE GOH

ART DIRECTOR

That the editorial staff here will start managing their time and be out early on deadline. If so, I'll know they've all been replaced by dangerous replicants.

PSN: TBA

PLAYING:

God of War III

WANTING:

Prince of Persia



PAUL TAYLOR

DEPUTY EDITOR

I'm cool with heights, as long as I'm strapped in. Put me in a rollercoaster and I'm sweet. Put me on a ladder a storey high and I'm freaking out.

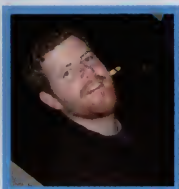
PSN: paulgusta

PLAYING:

Resonance of Fate

WANTING:

Just Cause 2



ADAM MATHEW

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Other than rabid sock puppets and the threat of nuclear war? Carnies. Circus folk. Nomads, you know. Smell like cabbage. Small hands.

PSN: YourmumsAWESOME

PLAYING:

The waiting game (G75)

WANTING:

See above



JAMES COTTEE

CONTRIBUTOR

The only thing I fear is fear itself. I also have an irrational fear of paradoxes, now that I think about it. Great. Next stop: the fetal position.

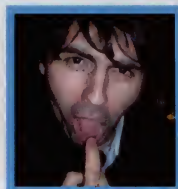
PSN: DrWho3987

PLAYING: Monster

Hunter Freedom Unite

WANTING:

Medal of Honor



JAMES ELLIS

CONTRIBUTOR

I am cougar-phobic. As I wander the savannah that is the streets, I must constantly pause and scan the horizon for potential lioness ambushes. I'll be mauled for sure.

PSN: gtfaster49

PLAYING:

Assassin's Creed II

WANTING:

FIFA 11



GT VS LIFE

DRIVING AMBITION

Aussie, Aussie, Aussie...

25-year-old Melbourne science student, Daniel Holland, is the Australian winner of Nissan GT Academy 2010.

This is the first time an Australian will be represented in the competition, which will see him go head-to-head at UK's Silverstone race track against other finalists from 17 countries. The prize? The opportunity to race a full season in the European GT4 Cup in a Nissan 370Z prepared by RJN Motorsport in May, 2010.

Holland consistently recorded top ranking lap times on the international leader board during the online round of the competition to secure his place in the national final, which he won with a little luck.

"I'm stoked! I can't believe that my passion for *Gran Turismo* has provided me with this opportunity. The fact that I'm now going to Silverstone at the end of this month as the first Australian to take part in Nissan GT Academy, blows my mind," said Holland.

"It's been a phenomenal day with some worthy challengers, but right now, I just can't wait to get to the UK to compete internationally."

Daniel follows in the footsteps of Spanish student Lucas Ordoñez, who graduated from his PlayStation 3 to become a full-time racing driver via Nissan GT Academy.

"GT Academy epitomises the Sony make, believe spirit, the power of turning dreams into reality" said Raoul Bedford, senior director of marketing at Sony Computer Entertainment Oz.

"From enjoying *Gran Turismo* on PlayStation in your living room, to perfecting the ultimate simulator game and aspiring to become a real life race car driver, PlayStation and Nissan have given Daniel Holland the opportunity to fulfil his dream through GT Academy."

"The team at PlayStation share Daniel Holland's excitement and anticipation as he heads to the UK. With 2010 being the inaugural year of Australia's involvement in Nissan GT Academy, we wish him well and will be supporting him all the way."



GLENN SERON

V8 Supercars legend Glenn Seton was on hand to give the winner a few pointers about being a professional racing driver. Glenn was there thanks to his work with Nissan, but coincidentally enough it was his Ford Credit Falcon that was the first Australian car in the GT series.

AMATEUR HOUR

The GT4 European Cup is a sports car championship created and organized by the Stéphane Ratel Organisation and sanctioned by FIA. It is an amateur championship that follows a formula similar to the FIA GT3 European Championship.

GT4 class cars are mostly track day cars – factory-built race cars available to the public. All cars are test driven by the FIA

and then modified so that they all have near identical performance levels. Once a car has been approved by the FIA, it cannot be modified by the teams, eliminating continual development costs for constructors. All cars run on regulated Pirelli tires to further equalise performance.

Since GT4 class drivers are meant to be true amateurs, these criteria are tighter than that seen

in GT3. Drivers under the age of 30 are not allowed to have had a top 10 finish in any national or international single-seater championship, nor to have had a distinguishable career in a national or international GT championship. Drivers over the age of 30 who did not receive their racing licenses until after turning 30 and having no single-seater experience at all are also allowed in the series.





16 IN FOCUS
We'll check
out some more Gran
Turismo games.
Must play this. Now.



**18 AROUND
THE WORLD
IN PS3**
We've been looking for
all that's new.



**24 ANGRY
SACKBOY**
We've got the sack
to say anything we
want. Do you?

SIZE COMPLEX

LOST PLANET, LOST CONTENT?

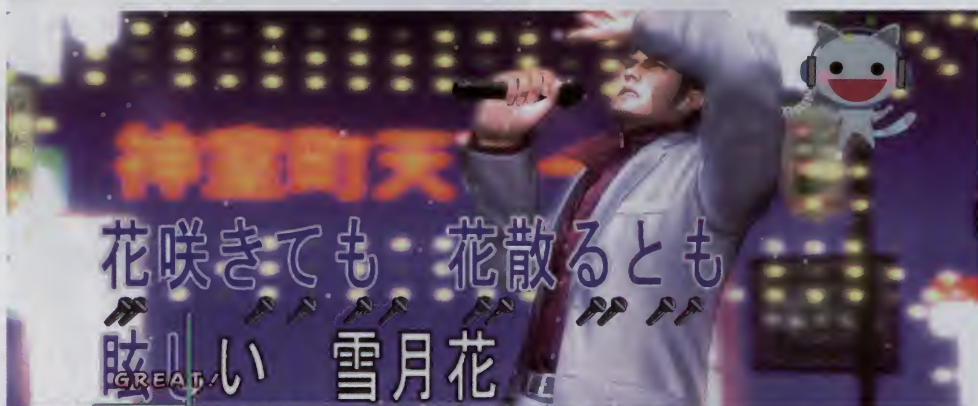


When *Lost Planet 2*'s producer, Jun Takeuchi, mentioned that he had to cut a lot of content from the final game because of size constraints and that it may appear in DLC form in the future – the speculation windmill went into overdrive.

The theorem that got bandied about was whether

this was true on the PS3 version (a Blu-ray disc can hold a lot more information than the 360's paltry DVD).

Capcom confirmed "The major content for both versions will be identical and ensure an enjoyable experience for consumers of either platform." In other words; we could have given you free crap, but didn't.



FOLGIVENESS, PREASE

DISHONOURABLE

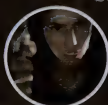
Now here's some content that *really* went missing. The PAL *Yakuza 3* has seen some cutting. Some cuts make sense (like a Japanese history quiz) whereas others make us want to commit seppuku in rage (the hostess club). Note: you can still go on dates with girls and strip clubs are plentiful. So it's not all bad.

IN SHORT...

Since the launch of the PS3, Sony have been continuously reducing the size of the PS3 OS memory footprint (through network updates) to give game developers more RAM to work with.



Heavy Rain has been banned in the United Arab Emirates. There's no official word as to why, but we're betting it has something to do with the "strong content including blood and nudity". Bah! Man-up, UAE.



Stuart Black, formerly Senior Designer on cult Criterion FPS *Black* and now Game Director of Codemasters' *Bodycount*, has been quoted as saying "current FPSs are f--king boring". Nice!



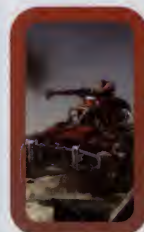
WHAT'S HOT OR NOT

Too hot to handle? Or too cold to hold?



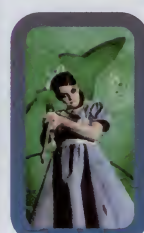
**3D TVs on
the way**
You can buy
one in April,
Richie Rich

Bloodsports
UFC 110
comes to Acer
Arena. "Hack
the bone!"



Scriptastic
Uncharted 2
Wins Writers
Guild Of
America Award

Border-crack
*The Secret
Armory of
General
Knox*, rocks



Heavy Rain
Madison
doesn't wipe
after the toilet
scene. Gross

Buh-bowwww
BioShock 2's
multiplayer
kept on
dropping out



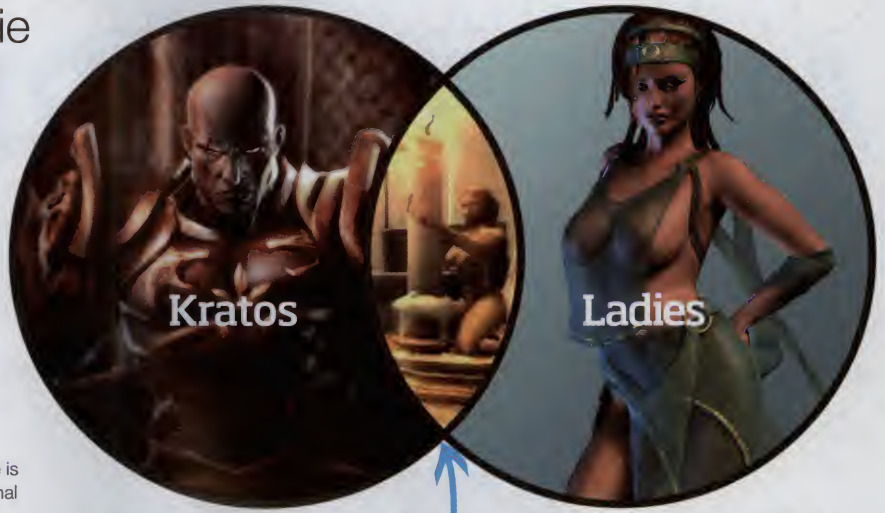
Raaaaaage
Trying to
play AVP on
Nightmare
(no deaths)

THE OPS CHARTS

Everything makes more sense in chart form. Especially pie charts. They're deliciously informative!

HE'S GREATOS

Kratos is a complex guy who is a swirling miasma of emotions. These include anger, rage, anger, fury, hate, anger, and anger. He is of course a creature of love too. Perhaps not 'love' in the traditional Valentine's sense – rather the "you, long time" usage of the term.



Ladies who get interactive with Kratos

TERRORISM & WAR



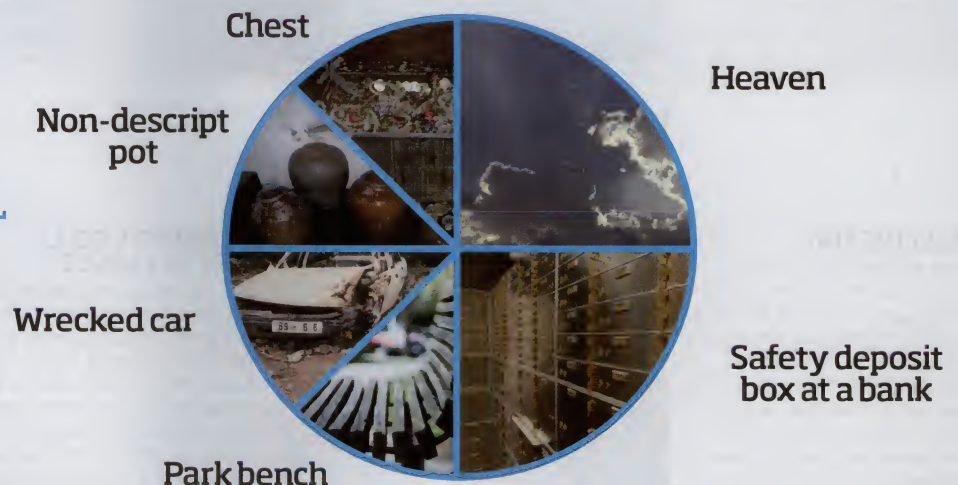
MONEY FOR TOM CLANCY

THE CLANCY EFFECT

Dennis Leary once sang a song that summed up Thomas Clancy's winning formula quite succinctly; the only thing white suburbanite slobs like better than football and porno is books about war. Don't believe us? Look to the chart.

WHERE WILL YOU HIDE YOUR IMMORTAL SOUL AFTER DEATH?

After studying various religions we've figured out what life is about: you're here to cark it and become a floaty red orb. Sounds like a sweet deal, huh? Well, there is a down-side. The fact of the matter is you're now a handy XP consumable for vampiric action heroes. Using a ouija board we conducted a quick, unholy survey to find out where people are stashing their souls nowadays.



TOP 10

GAMES THAT ALMOST WERE

Game ideas are like popcorn seeds; they don't always pop. Any failed seeds are devoured, passed through the publisher and unceremoniously dumped. Here are 10 concepts that didn't pop. They were *pooped*.

2

FEAR & RESPECT

Fear & Respect was cancelled in 2006 when Midway realised finding people who *hadn't* played *GTA: San Andreas* would be problematic. Equally dubiously, it was also set to feature Snoop Dogg as the main character. Snoop may feel there's plenty of fizz left in his gizzle, but at 38 he's far too old to be jogging around South Central LA shooting people in the fizz.



3

THRILL KILL

Widely (albeit illegally) available today – despite the fact it was never officially published – *Thrill Kill* was an ultra-violent four-player brawler for the original PlayStation. It was canned in 1998, mere weeks before shipping. It was entirely completed, but after EA acquired Virgin Interactive it decided against releasing the game or even selling it to another publisher.



5

DIRTY HARRY

Marvellous. How on God's green earth did this ever get cancelled? Clint Eastwood himself was to supply the authentic Callahan growl, talented team The Collective was to develop – how could this *not* be awesome? We wanna hand our press badge to the punk-ass jive-turkey who chose to cancel this and tell him to use it as a seven point suppository.



6

THE DARK KNIGHT

This got leaked when Gary Oldman said he knew, "an awful lot of effort had gone into getting Batman's gliding abilities to feel suitably smooth and fluid for the *Dark Knight* game". Whoops. Oldman did not name a developer in the interview but anonymous sources reported that *The Dark Knight* was a "secret" project of Pandemic Studios Brisbane and EA.



8

KILLING DAY

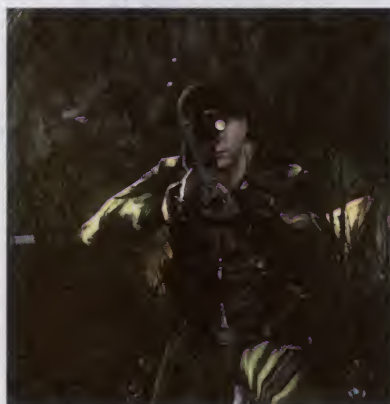
First revealed during Sony's E3 press conference in 2005, *Killing Day* has since gone the way of the dodo. The game was subsequently canceled in the middle of development and from what we can gather it was going to be like a John Woo, dual-wielding wet dream set in the first person. Interestingly, in 2009 Ubisoft filed for the trademark on *Killing Day*.



9

STARGATE SG-1: THE ALLIANCE

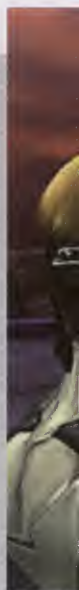
SG-1:TA was to be a first-person shooter based on season eight of *Stargate SG-1* using a modified version of the Unreal Engine – until it got canned in 2006. Developer Perception Studios battled it out with JoWood Productions in court during the aftermath and won, but with all its staff sacked the project never had a chance.



1

STARCRRAFT: GHOST

StarCraft: Ghost, a third-person stealth spin-off from Blizzard Entertainment's nerdtacular sci-fi strategy series, was announced way back in 2002 for PS2. Looking back on our archives we found a huge feature on the game, and it looked near-enough to completion to us at the time. Due for release in 2003, *Ghost* was pushed back to 2004, then 2005, then 2006. Development was finally "suspended" in March 2006. We know more-or-less final versions of the game exist (although not outside of former staff), but it's a generation old now. If you're still smarting over this one you'd best build a bridge and get over it.





4

FEAR EFFECT INFERNO

Announced for PS2 in 2001 and cancelled two years later, *Fear Effect Inferno* was a casualty of cost-cutting at Eidos. *Fear Effect* and *Fear Effect 2 Retro Helix* were well-received critically, although nearly a decade on about the only thing we remember about them is that they came on four CDs and featured cel-shaded lesbians.



7

JURASSIC PARK SURVIVAL

Here's a pro tip for surviving Jurassic Park: don't take a dump during a thunderstorm near the T.rex enclosure. This 2001 effort was supposed to be a third-person survival horror game for the PS2. Judging from the footage in the trailer it was, in fact, going to be triceratops turd encoded onto a disc. Extinct for good reason.



10

UNTITLED PS3 INDIANA JONES

Announced in 2007, and touting the use of NaturalMotion's Euphoria middleware to mimic human behavior, this Indy adventure is now stacked in a non-descript box somewhere in the Defense Department's warehouse. It's so sad to see any Indy project die. It affects our heart like Mola Ram escalating a nipple-twister.



A ROB ZOMBIE FILM HALLOWEEN II

THE SEQUEL TO THE BOX-OFFICE SMASH HALLOWEEN



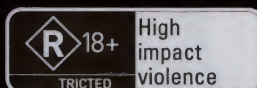
'ONE OF THE MOST ORIGINAL AND SHOCKING ENTRIES IN THE SERIES.'

- Tony Timponi, FANGORIA

ON DVD MARCH 4

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GLENN CARLAND "GABRIEL STOVER" BRANDON TROST "BOB WEINSTEIN" HARVEY WEINSTEIN MATTHEW STERN ANDY LA MARCA
"MALEK AKKAD" ANDY COULD ROB ZOMBIE "ROB ZOMBIE"

DIMENSION



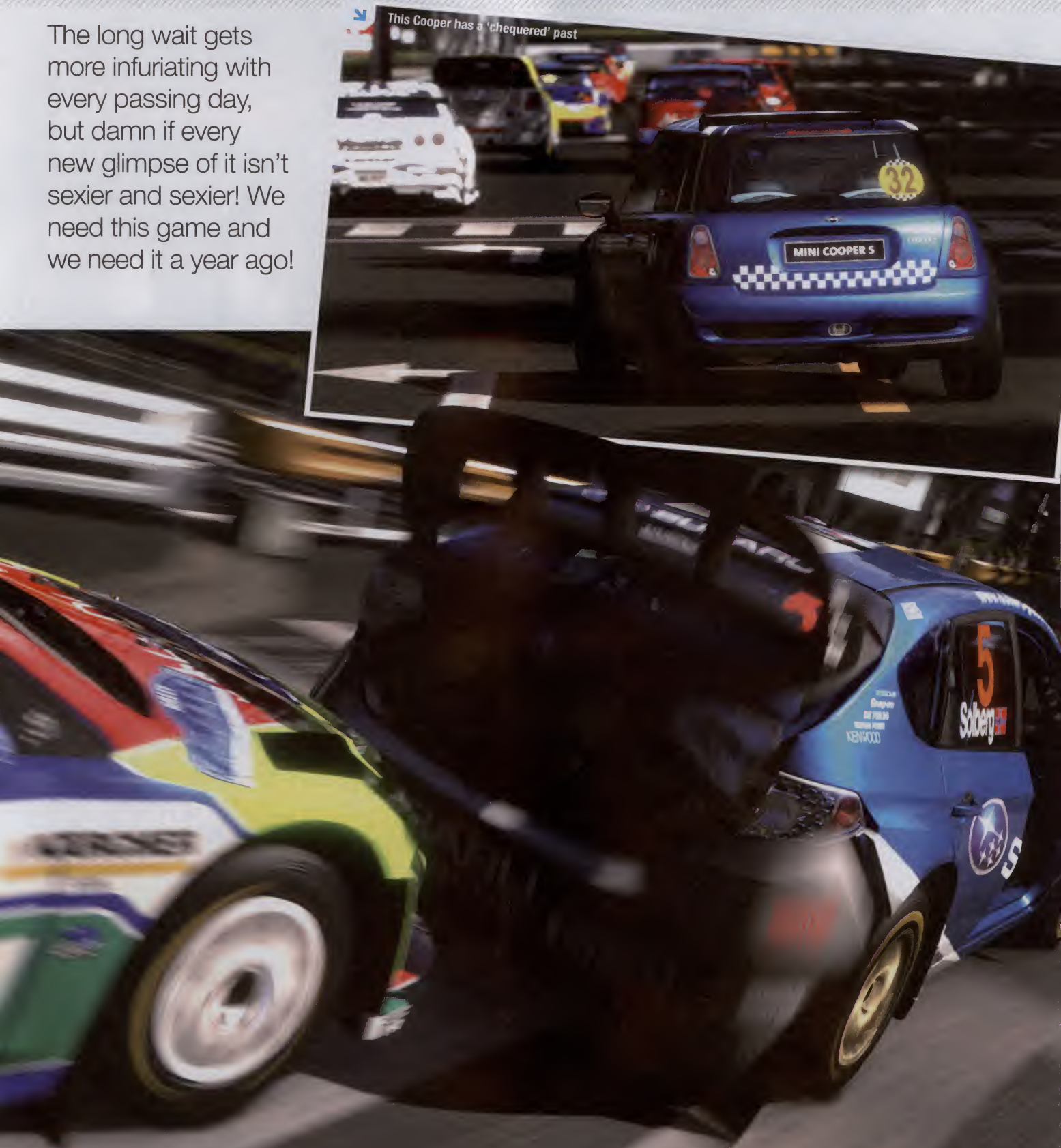
ROB ZOMBIE 'HELLBILLY DELUXE 2'
NEW CD OUT NOW

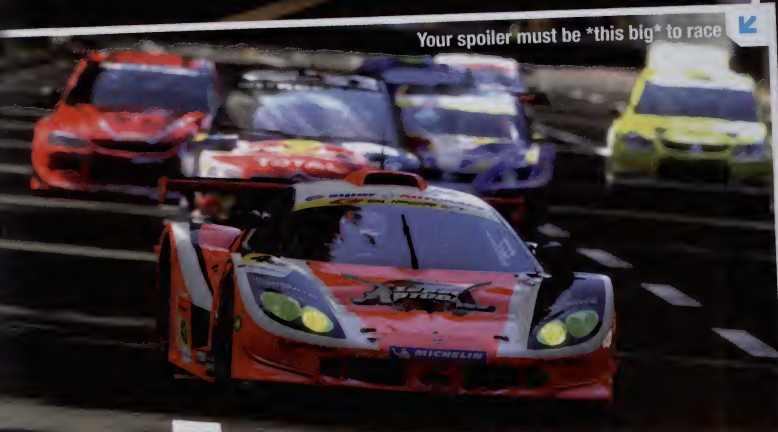
INFOCUS

GRAN TURISMO 5

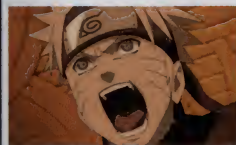
The long wait gets more infuriating with every passing day, but damn if every new glimpse of it isn't sexier and sexier! We need this game and we need it a year ago!

This Cooper has a 'chequered' past





FT-86 in: The Attack Of The Giant Fans



NARUTO SHIPPUDEN

NARUTO UZUMAKI IS BACK!



After two and a half years of training on the road with Jiraiya of the Sannin, Naruto is back in the Village Hidden in the Leaves... and not a moment too soon!

AVAILABLE ON DVD NOW

"if you love Dragon Ball Z you'll love Naruto" - DISNEY ADVENTURES

Gametradegs W9W
Unleash the power of light & sound

JBL HI-FI BORDERS



FOR FREE STREAMING, GALLERIES & HEAPS MORE ON MANGA AND ANIME VISIT MADMAN.COM.AU

NARUTO
Story and Art by Masashi Kishimoto
READ WHERE IT ALL BEGAN...
VOL 47 OUT NOW

NARUTO MANGA SERIES AVAILABLE NOW ONLINE AND AT ALL GOOD BOOKSTORES

AROUND THE WORLD **IN PS3**

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming

LONG BEACH, USA HEY DOG, HEARD YOU LIKE DOGS

A Kotaku reader in Long Beach, California happened by his local animal shelter and noticed that a section of it was sponsored by a videogame developer. Naughty Dog apparently donated funds for the upkeep of one kennel in the facility. The best thing: no press release was issued with pictures of it being built, or anything – it was just something that got done. Nice work, Naughty Dog!



FLORIDA, USA INCRIMINATING MUCH?

Deputies searching for a suspect they say stole a sport utility vehicle found him at his Haines City home playing the video game "Grand Theft Auto III," the Polk County Sheriff's Office said. Michael Ray Ekes, 30, of 115 Arbuthnot Lane, was arrested and charged with – you guessed it – grand theft auto, along with burglary of a conveyance, possession of burglary tools with intent to use. Busted.



VIRGINIA, USA DEATHMATCH SKILLZ

Research currently being undertaken by the Office of Naval Research is showing that videogame training is having "surprising" results, according to a story on the Department of Defense website. Gamers perform 10 to 20 per cent higher in terms of perceptual and cognitive ability than non-gamers. Apparently games increase your ability to focus and attend to stimuli in the outside world.



NEW YORK, USA GO TO... HECK?

A Super Bowl ad for Dante's Inferno has fallen victim to CBS censors. Originally using the tagline "Go to Hell," CBS rejected it, thinking it was too over the top for viewers watching the big game. The Hollywood Reporter blog reported that EA instead substituted the more sedate tagline "Hell Awaits" instead. Reminds us of the ill-fated Aussie tourism tagline "Where the bloody hell are you?"



CANBERRA, HERE LANDSLIDE OF AWESOME?

Responses to the Australian R18+ Discussion Paper have been overwhelmingly in favor of adding the category. A Copyright and Classification Policy Branch member, as reported by GameSpot, claimed that as of February 1, 2010, 6,239 responses to the R18+ Discussion Paper had been received. While only 1,084 of those had been processed so far, just 11 responses were against the R18+ category.



INTERNATIONAL CHARTS



UK

Source: ELSPA

- 1 Aliens vs Predator Sega
- 2 BioShock 2 2K
- 3 Modern Warfare 2 Activision
- 4 FIFA 10 EA
- 5 Vancouver 2010 Sega
- 6 Bayonetta Sega
- 7 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves Sony
- 8 Army of Two: The 40th Day EA
- 9 MAG Sony
- 10 Darksiders THQ



JAPAN

Source: VGCHARTZ

- 1 Star Ocean 4: The Last Hope Square Enix
- 2 Sacred 2: Fallen Angel Sega
- 3 End of Eternity EA
- 4 MAG Sony
- 5 Ar tonelico III Banpresto
- 6 Final Fantasy XIII Square Enix
- 7 Ryu Ga Gotoku 3 Sega
- 8 Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 Activision
- 9 MGS 4: Guns of the Patriots Konami
- 10 Operation Flashpoint: DR Codemasters



USA

Source: NPD

- 1 BioShock 2 2K
- 2 Dante's Inferno EA
- 3 Modern Warfare 2 Activision
- 4 MAG Sony
- 5 Star Ocean: The Last Hope Square Enix
- 6 White Knight Chronicles Sony
- 7 Madden NFL 10 EA
- 8 Assassin's Creed II Ubisoft
- 9 God of War Collection Sony
- 10 NBA 2K10 2K

PRE-ORDER PARADISE

The hottest deals, the coolest stuff – what are you waiting for?



UFC UNDISPUTED 2010

UFC Undisputed 2010 is the only mixed martial arts (MMA) videogame that delivers the action, intensity and prestige of the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC). Step into the Octagon to experience the most advanced and commanding virtual MMA action with more than 100 of the best UFC fighters in the world. Experience intelligent and intuitive combat, increased fighter customisation, robust career progression, challenging new gameplay modes and explosive online offerings.

JB HIFI

Price: \$99 (online)

Estimated Dispatch Date: 25 May 2010

EB GAMES

Price: \$108 (online)

Estimated Dispatch Date: 3 February 2010

Special Offer:

Bonus exclusive to EB Games:
Preorder to receive an exclusive bonus *UFC Undisputed 2010* Four Character Unlock!

GOD OF WAR 3: COLLECTOR'S EDITION

God of War III finds Kratos raining carnage and destruction upon the gods who have betrayed him and the entire Ancient Greek world. Armed with his deadly double-chained blades, Kratos will take on mythology's darkest creatures while solving intricate puzzles on his merciless quest to destroy Olympus and the mighty Zeus himself.

Unfortunately, by the time you read this the pre-order deal listed here will have run its course. Here's a look at what the more savvy gaming brethren among us scored.

EB GAMES

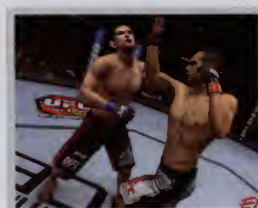
Price: \$119.95

Estimated Dispatch Date: Right now!

Special Offer:

The *God of War III: Collector's Edition* contains:

- * Special Collector's Edition Packaging
- * *God of War* Postcards
- * Extra DLC via PSN including:
 - Exclusive Combat Arena
 - Phantom of Chaos character skin
 - Dominus character skin



JUST CAUSE 2

Rico Rodriguez is back but this time he's on a mission to go after the man who knows him best, his former commanding officer, mentor and friend. Tom Sheldon has gone rogue and disappeared with millions of agency cash and top secret intel. His last known whereabouts – the South East Asian island of Panau.

JB HIFI

Price: \$99 (online)

Estimated Dispatch Date: 1 April 2010

EB GAMES

Price: \$59.99

Estimated Dispatch Date: 23 March 2010

Special Offer: Online / Store Customers: A code and instructions to unlock Rico's Signature Gun will come packaged with your game.

DEAD TO RIGHTS: RETRIBUTION

Returning to Grant City, a boom town gone bust that is falling to the worst excesses of crime, greed and corruption; *Dead to Rights: Retribution* follows vice cop Jack Slate as he fights to expose shadowy figures that will stop at nothing to exert their deadly influence over the crumbling metropolis.

JB HIFI

Price: \$95 (online)

Estimated Dispatch Date: 22 April 2010

Exclusive JB HIFI Pre-order Bonus includes:

- * Bonus DLC via PSN
- Jack GAC Suit (increases Jack's health)
- Action Mode (grants the ability to play through the game using explosive rounds. Booyah!)



MARCH 18 GOD OF WAR III

One of the most eagerly-anticipated games of the year is landing in stores as you read this. Need any more reasons to grab it immediately? Turn to page 60 and read our review. It's a bloodthirsty goregasm of swords, sandals and sex and you'd be doing yourself a disservice if you missed it. We'd pray that you don't, but Kratos wouldn't listen.

THIS MONTH

Your 30-day planner of games and goodness!



MARCH
25-28

2010 FORMULA ONE AUSTRALIAN GP

Four days of auto racing featuring not only F1, but Formula Ford, Australian GT, Mini Challenge and V8 Supercars. All that, plus a host of special events. Albert Park, Melbourne. Tickets start at \$39 from Ticketek.



MARCH
30
APR 9

2010 RIP CURL PRO

After 38 years Bells Beach is the longest running ASP World Tour event. If you're in Victoria or fancy a pilgrimage, hit the Rip Curl Pro Surf and Music Festival at Torquay.



MARCH 30

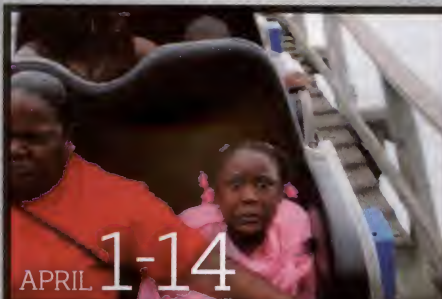
GRAND THEFT AUTO: EPISODES FROM LIBERTY CITY

It's the game we'd just about written off any hopes of seeing on PS3, but now it's here. At \$69.95 it's two games for the price of (less than) one – and in most ways it's better than *GTAIV*. Buy it.

**JUST CAUSE 2, CLASH OF THE TITANS**

The open-world action-fest we just can't stop playing is available today – see why we're addicted. Also, the big-budget remake *Clash of the Titans* (starring Sam "Wortho" Worthington) opens today. Looks good.

APRIL 1



APRIL 1-14

2010 SYDNEY ROYAL EASTER SHOW

One of the biggest and best family events of the year is on at Sydney Showground, Olympic Park. Even if you're too young to have your own family yet, you can still go there ride the Zipper and puke cheese-on-a-stick all over strangers.



APRIL 9-11

SUPANOVA POP CULTURE EXPO BRISBANE

Geeks rejoice – it's a sci-fi and fantasy spectacular at RNA Showgrounds, Brisbane. A number of special guests will feature. In addition, the Melbourne show will run from April 16-18 at Royal Showgrounds, Melbourne.



APRIL 15

THE LORD OF THE RINGS TRILOGY ON BLU-RAY

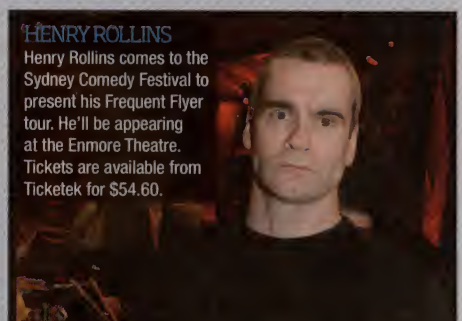
The long wait for the arrival of Peter Jackson's phenomenally successful Tolkien trilogy on Blu-ray is over. Each film in glorious high-definition, plus a truckload of extras.



APRIL 17-18

RED BULL AIR RACE

We're not sure how these planes actually take off (after you factor in the sheer weight of each pilot's enormous brass balls) but they do, and they're returning to Perth. Get there.

**HENRY ROLLINS**

Henry Rollins comes to the Sydney Comedy Festival to present his Frequent Flyer tour. He'll be appearing at the Enmore Theatre. Tickets are available from Ticketek for \$54.60.

APRIL 18-19

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Coming soon to a store near you...

OUT NOW

BioShock 2
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: 2K

MAG
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: Sony

Star Ocean: The Last Hope - International
Genre: RPG
Distributor: Ubisoft

Guitar Hero: Van Halen
Genre: Music
Distributor: Activision

Heavy Rain
Genre: Family
Distributor: Ubisoft

White Knight Chronicles
Genre: RPG
Distributor: Sony

Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce
Genre: Action
Distributor: THQ

Aliens vs Predator
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: Sega

Battlefield: Bad Company 2
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: EA

Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Sega

Final Fantasy XIII
Genre: RPG
Distributor: Ubisoft

Tony Hawk: RIDE
Genre: Sports
Distributor: Activision

Yakuza 3
Genre: RPG
Distributor: Sega

Karaoke Revolution
Genre: Music
Distributor: Mindscape

MARCH 2010

God of War III
Genre: Action
Distributor: Sony

MotoGP 09/10
Genre: Racing
Distributor: THQ

Resonance of Fate
Genre: RPG
Distributor: Sega

BlazBlue
Genre: Fighting
Distributor: AIE

Grand Theft Auto: Episodes from Liberty City
Genre: Action
Distributor: Rockstar

APRIL 2010

Dead to Rights: Retribution
Genre: Action
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Clash of the Titans
Genre: Action
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Super Street Fighter IV
Genre: Fighting
Distributor: THQ

Red Dead Redemption
Genre: Action
Distributor: Rockstar

Iron Man 2
Genre: Action
Distributor: Sega

2010 FIFA World Cup
Genre: Sports
Distributor: EA

Just Cause 2
Genre: Action
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

MAY 2010

Lost Planet 2
Genre: Action
Distributor: THQ

LEGO Harry Potter
Genre: Family
Distributor: Warner Bros.

Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands
Genre: Action
Distributor: Ubisoft

JUNE 2010

Blur
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Activision

Mafia II
Genre: Action
Distributor: 2K

TBC 2010

Dead Rising 2
Genre: Action
Distributor: THQ

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days
Genre: Action
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Fallout: New Vegas
Genre: RPG
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Ghost Recon: Future Soldier
Genre: Action
Distributor: Ubisoft

Castlevania: Lords of Shadow
Genre: Action
Distributor: Mindscape

WRC
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Tuffkat

LA Noire
Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Rockstar

Gran Turismo 5
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Sony

Alpha Protocol
Genre: RPG
Distributor: Sega

Enslaved
Genre: Action
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

The Last Guardian
Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Sony

Max Payne 3
Genre: Action
Distributor: Rockstar

Agent
Genre: Action
Distributor: Rockstar

Majin: The Fallen Realm
Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

R.U.S.E.
Genre: RTS
Distributor: Ubisoft

Backbreaker
Genre: Sports
Distributor: Tuffkat

Spec Ops: The Line
Genre: Action
Distributor: 2K

ModNation Racers
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Sony

AUSSIE CHARTS

Source: GFK



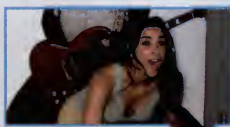
QUOTE UNQUOTE

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"We had always known them as sort of somewhat a failed developer of music games."

Bobby Kotick expresses regret about not buying Harmonix.



"We like the same things. Order in, watch TV, play *Modern Warfare*."

Sarah Silverman makes geeks all over the globe stiff in the pants, and that's after bending over in front of a giant Jack Black poster.



"We have a lot of interest in this motion controller, we start to play with it, and yeah, we definitely want to do something with it."

David Cage bangs on about something else.



"I can't remember which one, though. You shall have to wait and see. Sorry it took so long."

David Coverdale has signed off two tracks to a music game. He just can't remember which.

OPINION

WAR IS
SMELL

I want to experience a videogame where I am as badass as Arnie was in *Commando*. Not because Colonel John Matrix is an action hero perpetually locked on 'God mode'. Nor because he begins every morning with Pop-Tarts and a big bowl of green berets. I don't even want to take down six heavily-armed soldiers with the contents of a tool shed – which, once you extrapolate that shit, means Matrix can take on the world from inside a Bunnings Warehouse. No sir, I want to be Matrix in a videogame because he can literally *smell* his enemies coming with his next-gen nostrils.

Visuals in video games have come a long way and are set to push even further thanks to the advent of fandangle 3D glasses that make you look like a douchenozzle. But what of the other senses? Smell can theoretically be digitised, and there are researchers working to do exactly that. If those wacky Japanese have their way, we could all one day be getting "scent-ual" experiences from our entertainment: "The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications will set up an industry-academia-government research and development unit this year that will work to commercialise virtual reality television by 2020". This VRTV would generate three-dimensional, high-definition images that can be viewed from any angle, also allowing viewers to feel and smell the objects they are watching. In practical terms; you could reach out, snap a soldier's neck like a chicken and

be greeted with a god-awful stink when his bowels give way.

Ahem.

But wait; I've got more awesome ideas!

Imagine buying a Bugatti Veyron in *Gran Turismo* and copping that new car fragrance before replacing it with the heady musk of racing tyres raked across asphalt. What about odourising your entire house with the sulphurous, fart-stink of hell thanks to a brief stint in *Dante's Inferno*? Immersive!

Think of the multiplayer possibilities.

You, like Colonel John Matrix, will sniff the battlefield into being your bitch. The swirling of cordite in the air after a firefight will alert you to an ambush around the corner. Tracking your wounded prey via the faintly metallic whiff of his blood. You shall set new benchmarks of disrespect by teabagging people with your odious virtual junk.

This is the way forward, people. The future must reek of awesome. I want my next PlayStation game to punch me in the nose, after which point I will score it 10 out of 10 along with the verdict, "This game absolutely stank! It is a must buy!" Someone ought to jump on this concept quick and trademark the technology. Hell, you could call it 'Project Nasal' but insist people pronounce it in a poncey way.

Like 'nah-zahl'.

Adam Mathew himself is a scential experience.



“The future must reek of awesome. I want my next PlayStation game to punch me in the nose”

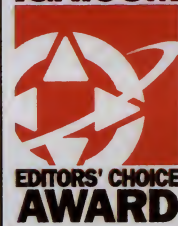


"One of my **favorite fighters of all time**"

- IGN.com

www.blazblue.com.au

IGN.COM



score:
94

"BlazBlue raises the barometer on which all fighters should be judged"

- 1up.com

score:
100

"BlazBlue's online system puts titles like Street Fighter IV to shame"

- GamingAge.com

score:
100

"BlazBlue packs what may be the best online play ever seen in a 2D fighting game"

- GameSpy.com

score:
90

GAME FEATURES:

- Unrivalled depth to online play
- High definition graphics
- Spectacular 3D arenas
- Unique characters
- Deep story mode
- Exclusive PAL content



LIMITED TIME OFFER:

Receive a **FREE** Arcade Stick with every copy of **BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger** for the Playstation 3 purchased during our **limited time** offer.



Available March 2010



PS3



XBOX 360

XBOX LIVE



Distributed by
AI
ALL INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
From Battle to new Legend



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OPINION

THE DEEP
SOUTH

I mentioned a few months back that I've never been to South Australia. I've received a few letters since encouraging me to do so, but I don't like churches and I hate wine so I can't think of any other reasons to visit. Besides, I still think there's something wrong with that state.

It's amazing how fast South Australia is becoming a bit of a laughing stock. Decades of generalisation turned US states like Georgia into a slack-jawed rabble of inbred redneck hillbilly yokels. It didn't matter whether it was true or not – all that mattered is that people just began to assume the official state welcome was, "Get back in your car and go back where y'all comes from." That, or some mild to moderate sodomy.

“South Australia is a just one dead canoeist away from being completely written-off as a banjo-bashing backwoods”

Everybody's seen *Deliverance*, right? South Australia is a just one dead canoeist away from being completely written-off as a banjo-bashing backwoods.

It's the people that run it, however, that are the problem.

South Australian Attorney-General Michael Atkinson has come out and claimed his family is in more danger from irate gamers than outlaw bikies, after a threatening note was slipped under his door.

"I feel that my family and I are more at risk from gamers than we are from the outlaw motorcycle gangs who also hate me and are running a candidate against me," he told ABC's *Good Game*.

"The outlaw motorcycle gangs haven't been hanging around my doorstep at 2am. A gamer has."

Of course, this is very easy to say. However, Atkinson has a track record in bullshit. This letter incident allegedly happened a year ago. Also, in 2004 he told South Australian Parliament that bikies had used a park barbeque in his electorate to



OFFICIAL
PLAYSTATION
ANGRY SACKBOY

"cook a cat for human consumption". He was forced to apologise when it was discovered the animal was not a cat, the incident happened at another location and there were no bikies involved. This is the same man who assumes if you back the introduction of an R18+ rating for videogames you're raising your hand for "cruel sex" (his words). Word to the unwise: if sex is cruel you're doing it wrong.

But it's not just Atkinson; the entire South Australian parliament is stuck in the Stone Age. Thanks to a law triggered by Family First MP Dennis Hood, and quietly introduced at the beginning of the year, all R18+ rated movies in SA are now required to be displayed and sold in plain black boxes featuring only the film's title. The laws are designed to prevent children from being exposed to disturbing or pornographic covers. What it simply means, however, is that films like five-time Academy Award winner *The Deer Hunter* (featuring Robert DeNiro holding a rifle), *Fight Club* (featuring Brad Pitt holding a bar of soap), *Mad Max* (featuring Mel Gibson holding in a shit) and *The Hangover* (featuring a bearded man holding a baby) will be unceremoniously stuffed into what many have dubbed burka boxes and treated no differently than straight-to-video soft pornos. Why?

Governments doing stupid things is nothing new. It had almost stopped astonishing me. The Rudd government, for instance, is apparently handing more than \$70 million to schools run by the Exclusive Brethren. It's a cult. Your tax dollars are being given to people who prevent their children listening to a stereo, going to a cinema, watching the news, joining a sports club, eating with other kids or even owning pets. Giving money to a cult is a stupid idea. But I wasn't astonished.

The R18+ DVD cover shambles though? Consider me thoroughly astonished. This is a stupid law. If you support it you are a stupid person.

I honestly could not live in South Australia. Putting all R18+ rated DVDs into blank boxes because of concerns about porn is like using a bazooka to kill a fly. It the most asinine thing I've ever heard in close to 30 years. All this time and money to simply turkey-slap the film industry? Is there *that little to do* in South Australia?

I think my child can handle seeing a picture of Robocop getting out of a police car without being irreversibly corrupted. If you do too, and you live in South Australia, vote with your feet.

Leave.

Angry Sackboy is against creeping conservatism. Exclusive Brethren and South Australian MPs are advised to sit on it and rotate.

BENZENE

AN INGREDIENT IN PAINT STRIPPER

AMMONIA

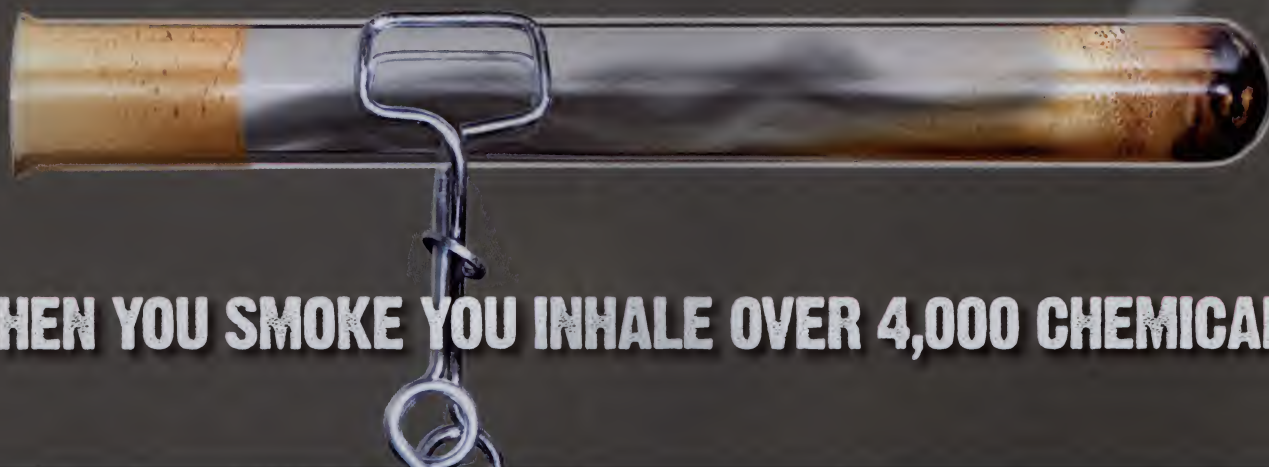
THE BLEACH FOUND IN TOILET CLEANER

HYDROGEN CYANIDE

USED IN RAT POISON

ACETONE

THE CHEMICAL IN NAIL POLISH REMOVER



WHEN YOU SMOKE YOU INHALE OVER 4,000 CHEMICALS

Cigarette smoke is a toxic, poisonous mix of substances.
And smoking delivers it straight into your body.



Australian Government

NOW IS THE TIME TO QUIT.
australia.gov.au/quitnow

Quitline
131 848

Every cigarette is doing you damage

COMPETITIONS

WIN! WIN! WIN!



WIN!

A GOOD CAUSE

To mark the upcoming release of the absolutely insane action-fest *Just Cause 2*, OPS has 50 huge limited-edition double-sided posters to give away. For a chance to win one, simply answer the following question and follow the entry instructions on page 27!

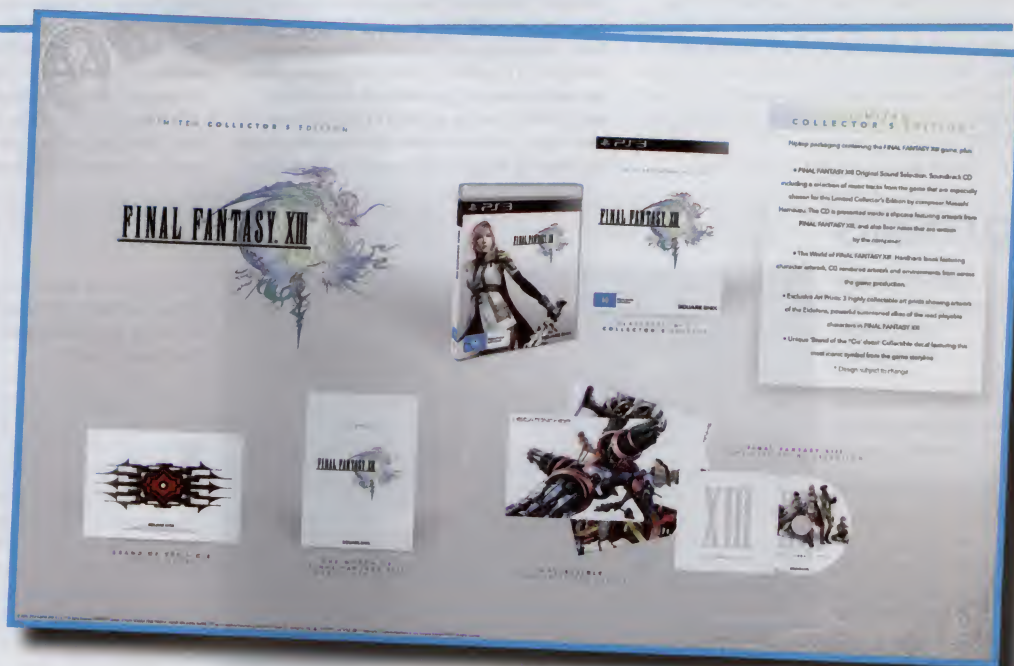
Question: In 25 words or less, how would YOU take down a maniacal dictator?

WIN!

BOOSTED!

Cheers to our good friends at Boost we've got two great prize packs to give away. Each one will include the new Boost Mobile Touch phone, plus a host of other Boost goodies – including a Boost Mobile Tech Deck, lanyard, phone bean bag and trucker cap. For a chance to score a pack, simply answer the question below and follow the entry instructions below.

Question: Who you gonna call, and why?



WIN!

LUCKY 13

Thanks to the folks at Ubisoft we've got a sweet haul of *Final Fantasy XIII* prizes to give away. The grand prize will include the *Final Fantasy XIII* Collector's Edition, a Collector's Edition strategy guide courtesy of Bluemouth Interactive and a limited poster and art card pack. Five runners-up will receive the *Final Fantasy XIII* standard edition and an art card pack. Simply answer the question below and follow our entry instructions.

Question: 13 may be considered unlucky, but what's your lucky number and why?

HOW TO ENTER

To enter *Official PlayStation Magazine* competitions email your entries to ops@themediafactory.com.au with the name of the competition ONLY in the subject line. Email entries are entitled to one entry (multiple entries will be deleted!). Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to **OPS competitions PO BOX 1037, Bondi Junction 1355**. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competitions close 27/04/2010. Winners will be notified by mail.

DOG DAZE

LETTER OF THE MONTH

The first thing I did after playing *Modern Warfare 2*'s 'No Russian' was start the level again to see if I could kill more people...

I'm not sick, I didn't scream "DIE HELPLESS CIVILIANS, MWAHAHAHA!" as I sprayed them with bullets. To me, the level was like an elaborate shooting gallery. Let's face it, little digital civilians running from little digital terrorists with little digital guns, it's not real, and it's certainly not the worst thing that a game has offered up for you to try.

My girlfriend has many pets, works in a pet store, volunteers for the RSPCA and has devoted her life to helping animals. I got punched in the arm when she saw me SNAP A DOG'S NECK. Some would say that wrenching the heads off dogs like overgrown twist-tops is far more brutal than shooting someone in the back. One punch in the arm and that was it. She didn't flip out cause it's not real.

Other games let you bludgeon innocents to death with sticks or set them on fire. And yet others focus almost solely on the art of brutal execution. Shooting a few unarmed people with a machine gun kind of makes you when you compare it to some of the other stuff out there. I respect that Infinity Ward included the level, it gave the player a brilliant first hand look at the brutality of Makarov, at the demands placed upon deep cover operatives and on the debate of "Would you kill one innocent to save one hundred?" I'm sure anyone who hated the level developed a deep hatred for Makarov and set about beating the game just for the chance of a little revenge.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that



➤ Second floor: ladies lingerie, wholesale death and carnage

developers have to find new ways to shock us, new ways to step outside of the box, new ways to make us talk, make us play, make us remember. I know I'll never forget.

Shiny Find, via email

Okay, this is the last letter we're going to print about the 'No Russian' level in *Modern Warfare 2*, but you have a point. Yes, it's not real, but it was affective, rather than completely effective. Although we're divided on whether it was well made (did we really have to go through the whole level before being sprung? Couldn't we have died mid-level and still have the same outcome?) it did want us to find Makarov.

Even though it's a digital fantasy – along with all videogames – it's still a vehicle for emotion. Hence your girlfriend dusting your arm. She certainly felt something (apart from your bicep) and reacted. While you say that other games let you hit people with sticks, it's the manner in which it's portayed that gets people fired up. Do you feel the same when you shoot someone in *Borderlands* compared to *COD*? And that's not to say that *Borderlands* isn't an emotion filled game. We're looking forward to seeing how developers are going to twist our emotions in future titles. We doubt that the 'No Russian' is going to be repeated. It was an experiment that ran its course.



Letter of the Month wins a copy of: **GOD OF WAR III**
Congratulations Shiny!
Turn to page 60 for our review of the latest adventures of Kratos.

CUTTINGS

MEIER OH MY

And seriously, hit Sid Meier.

Che Patterson,
Ravensthorpe

Uh, what? Will you bail us out of jail if we K.O. one of gaming's greats?

SHOCKING TRUTH

Good gravy Thomas Edison was a genius, he stole Tesla's good idea and became hugely successful.

Tyler James, NSW

If you say so. Historians, care to fill us in on the 'electrifying' facts?

SPACE MACGYVER

Now would be a great time to make a *Stargate* for this generation of console games. Naughty Dog could develop it since the type of gameplay of *Uncharted* could fit a *Stargate* game.

Adam Rabin, email

Hmm, What about Drake in space?



➤ Not pictured: Bruce Willis, Ben Affleck

away by your *Asteroids* skills? This has the potential to be a movie. It just goes to show that videogames can forge friendships. Wow.

STAYING FROSTY

Ibought *Aliens vs Predator* on its day of release, as well as the latest *OPS* with the *AVP* review. Got it home, played it like mad and was so impressed at the marine section of the game I couldn't wait to play as the Alien or Predator. The Marine section wasn't quite as hard as I thought it would be. A lot of it reminded me of *Left 4 Dead*. Melee shoot melee shoot and so on until it came to fight the Predator.

I thought the game let itself go after the Marine section. It took me around the four-five hour mark as you mentioned in the mag although I finished the Alien section within two hours, and I'm almost done with the Predator level in the same time. It's like the developers decided to make a really good Marine side and tack on the Alien and Predator in terms of game play time, like 'Here, have a demo of the two other sections that we will be release sometime in the future' instead of making them a really solid long lasting levels.

I did love in the Alien section how the game made you feel like you HAD to sneak around as taking on three or four Marines was a bad

COOL KIDS

Iremember playing *Asteroids* on a dull family holiday when I was young. I managed to get the top score, knocking off one of the kids from the 'cool gang'. Later that day there was a knock on the chalet door. It was said cool kid asking me if I wanted to play mini golf with the gang. The holiday improved from that point on!

Leon Harris, via Facebook

Wow. We are stunned. Were there any hotties there who were totally blown

SPEAK TO US!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

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STOREFRONT

We play the games so you can pick the cream from the crock. What deliciousness have you bought lately?



Sam Trueman
BioShock

"I've never played it before and I've read heaps about the sequel in your mags and I felt guilty for missing out on such a great game."



Andrew Threlfall
IL-2 Sturmovik

"A wonderful taste of WWII air combat, heaps better than the title!"



Brad Wall
MAG

"It's the best friggin' online shooter since Counterstrike. Well, in my book anyway. S.V.E.R owns the Shadow War bitches!"

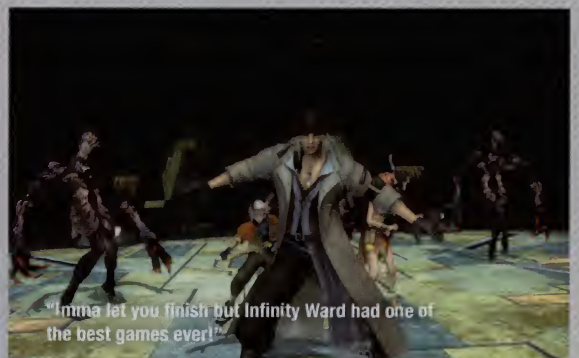


Sharlene Gardiner
Bayonetta

"Played through it twice already. Loved Luca, he is so much of a dope he can't be anything other than charming."

CAPTION THIS!

We have the screen, you provide the caption. Out of the stack of entries, congrats go to **Daniel Debattista**. Check out Facebook on Fridays for your chance to win!



"Imma let you finish but Infinity Ward had one of the best games ever!"



➤ If it bleeds, you can kill it. Apparently.

idea, unless you are extremely quick. The Predator section made you feel like you were untouchable.

One more thing in your last issue you mentioned how many games you could finish in the time it took you to finish *FFXIII*. Well I'll let you do the math on this one: how many times do you think you could finish *FFXIII* in the time I've been playing *World of Warcraft*. My total playing time is 17 days 21 hours and 47 minutes that's just on my Alliance character.

John-Paul Murphy, via email

World of what? Kidding. That's some epic **playtime, though our art director is calling** **you out as she's well over the 120-day** **mark. Anyway. You could've finished AVP** **roughly 36 times over, or FFXIII about** **seven times rather than feed money into** **the Activision-Blizzard cash pile. That** **Marine campaign is very similar to other** **shooters, while the Alien and Predator** **campaigns are far more stealth based.** **Both are an acquired taste, but consider** **that you can defy gravity: that's awesome.** **Maybe you're just totally rad at games, but** **go back and take your time. You might just** **like it even more.**

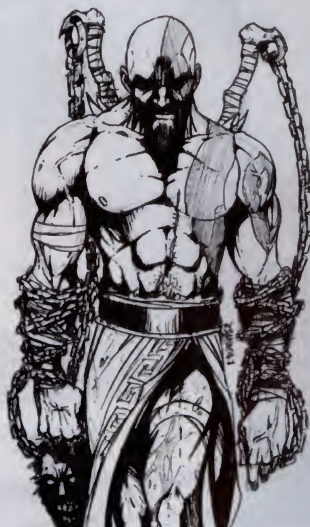
AWW, SHUCKS

Hl guys. Great mag. Indeed it's so good that I've been collecting it for 10 years now. I remember back when I was 15, sitting in geography flicking through my first *Official PlayStation Magazine*. I remember it was issue #10, it had Squall Lionheart on the cover, and it had Jodie Meares dressed as Lara Croft about a fifth of the way through the mag. Yes I've been here a long time. I stuck with it when the mag changed to *OPS2* magazine. Even though I couldn't afford a PS2 for another year, I still bought it and ate up every page. This letter comes to you as praise from myself, but also as an apology. In 10 years of dedicated collecting, I've written but three letters (including this one). My apology comes for letter number two. None of you would remember it, and frankly that's for the best as it was insulting to the editor at the time. I raged about a number of other things, and finally questioned whether I would continue to buy

the magazine. For shame. And so I apologise for that letter, and now offer my praise. Looking back at 10 years of the magazine, through multiple console generations, and many staff changes, the magazine has maintained its integrity. Maintained the level of high quality games journalism that I first enjoyed so much, and never once flagged in its sense of humour. It's this reflection that compels me to write this letter today. To say thanks for the great read. I've been berated by online 'tough guys' when I've quoted from the pages of this magazine. Told, "never quote from an official magazine ever again". A suggestion that came across more as a threat (as if these internet tyrants have any sway in the real world). But quote I will. I've always found my own judgement of games to align almost perfectly with the reviews in these pages. I've found the information provided on the games and the hardware alike to be straightforward and up front. So to all you at *OPS Towers*, past and present, I say thanks. P.S. I love *God of War* so much I drew you guys a quick sketch, in anticipation of *GOWIII*.

Mark Lauthier, via email

Excuse us as tear up in pride. We had to trim your letter to make your sweet illustration fit. Thanks for the props.



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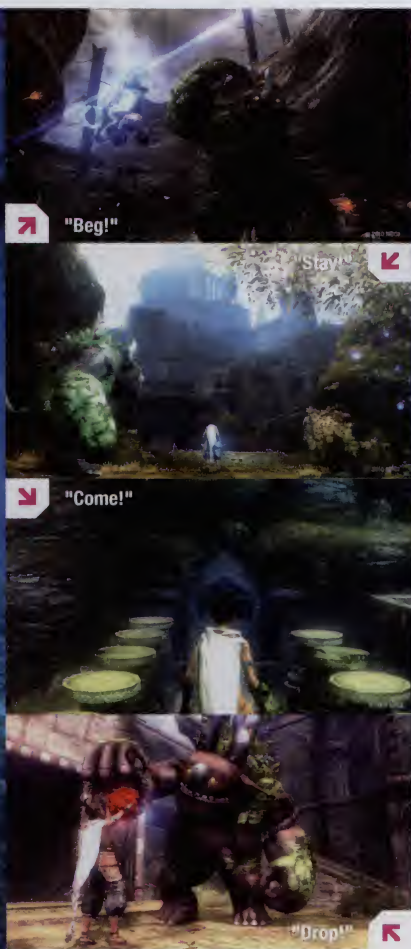
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WORDS: PAUL TAYLOR

MONSTER BASH

He's been part of one of Japan's most influential studios, and yet it's entirely possible you've never heard of him. Yoshiaki Okamoto explains to us why his latest title, *Majin*, is going to help save Japanese games.

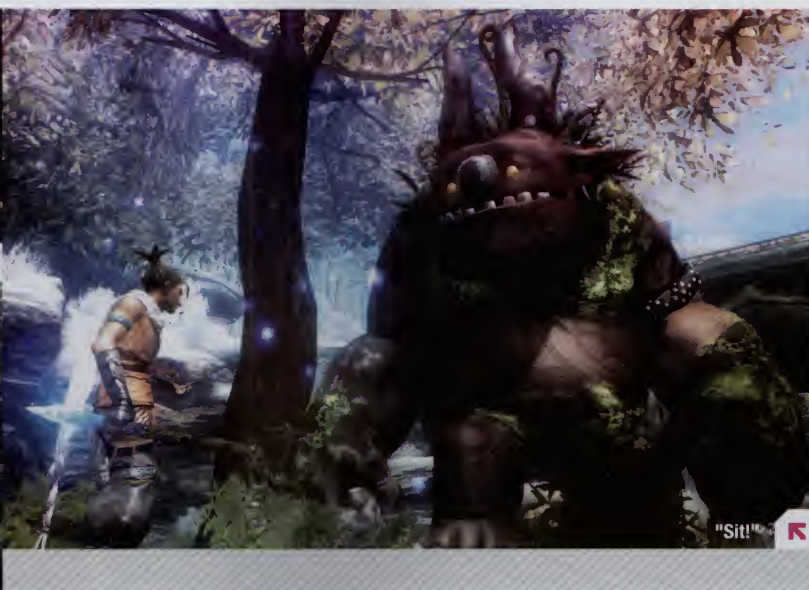


"I've graduated from fighting games," explains Yoshiaki Okamoto, CEO of Game Republic. "What I want to create now is action adventure games that capitalise on the specs of current-gen consoles. You're able to do a lot more. At the last couple of companies [I worked for] I was the fighting game creator so I'm trying to do something new." He's able to say this without a shred of hubris, as Okamoto worked for many years at Konami and Capcom on many of their titles. The most notable game he was partially responsible for creating? *Street Fighter II*. He also has credit for helping bring the might of *Final Fight's* Mike Haggar into the world. The man has chops.

Game Republic's offices in Tokyo are one of three of their studios, also located in Nagoya and Osaka. Okamoto and the rest of the staff are relaxed, speaking to us with ease about what they're trying to achieve in their two new projects. Okamoto, in particular, is glad to be free of the binds at Capcom, though that's not to say he's at all bitter. Just liberated.

"One of the biggest things is that when you're in a bigger company like Konami or Capcom there's also a lot of things that tie you down. Like sales. You have to be able to reach your numbers. One of the strategies is, okay, *Street Fighter II* did a great job, let's make sequels; you make games in a series.

"That is one of the things that limit the ability to come up with new ideas. Numbers are a little bit more important when you're with Konami or Capcom. From a creator standpoint – making *Biohazard* [*Resident Evil*], *Mega Man* – creating new things is the key to being innovative. In order to do that, the solution was to separate and create GR to introduce new ideas."



“When you play a game in third person you tend to feel like you're controlling a character, not yourself, **which is a hole**”

YOSHIKI OKAMOTO

Set up in 2003, GR made *Genji* and *Folklore* for the PS3. The former didn't rate so well in the west, generally written-off as a last-gen game on a next-gen system. Apt, as it was to be on PS2 before being 'promoted' to one the PS3's launch game without the proper technical backing, or time to make it more than it could have been. The latter, made a year later, rated higher, though still came away as being an average experience. Still, it hasn't deterred his enthusiasm for making new things and trying to increase the connection players have with games.

"One of the key points is the emotional attachment you get to the character," says Okamoto. "[With] RPGs in Japan you feel that you are the character. That is one of the missing pieces in the action adventure genre. When you play a game in third person you tend to feel like you're controlling a character, not yourself, which is a hole."

His plug for this hole? *Majin*. There have been a lot of great videogame partnerships:

Jak and Daxter, Ratchet and Clank, Yorda and Ico. Meet Tepeu and his Majin, Teotl.

"One of the concepts we had for this game was ecology, protecting nature," says the game's director, Takashi Shono. Humans have become prosperous and their inventions increasingly sophisticated, but as a consequence have emitted a gooey, pollution like substance. This stuff clings to the hearts of evil humans and transforms them into what's temporarily called The Darkness. It's up to you to defeat them. While there's a lot of fighting involved in *Majin*, the majority of your time will be spent solving puzzles in the grand tradition of games like *Zelda*, *Ico* and the original *Tomb Raider*.

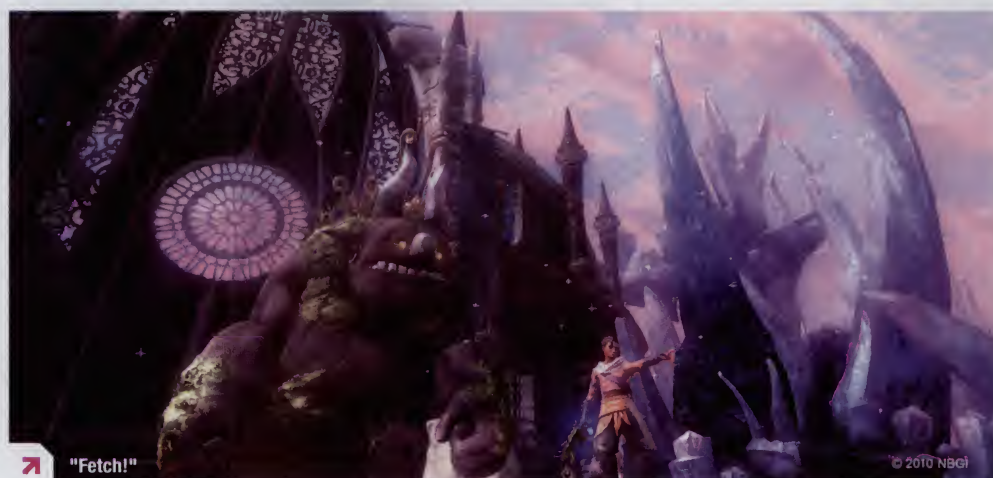
Your Majin is the muscle, while you as Tepeu are the brains. The Majin looks like a benign ogre with grass and flowers growing over his back, while Tepeu is lean, muscular and athletic. "The plants on [the Majin's] back are one of the tools to emphasise [the ecology link] a little bit," continued Shono. "When he's in a good state he'll have flowers. If it's bad, they might die."



MAD ABOUT MIKE

It's a fact that Platinum Games heavily referenced a whole bunch of Capcom titles in their witchin' adventure, *Bayonetta*, as many of their staff used to work for the developer in their Team Clover studio. It seemed only right ask Okamoto if Game Republic would do a Platinum Games and reference the mighty Mike Haggar in an upcoming game. His response, between the laughter?

"Probably not!" Oh. Nothing at all? "I'm trying to stay away from being trapped by zombies and one on one fighting. Until I make a stand with a hit title of my own, then I might rethink some of the past know-hows. Platinum Games did what they did because it was fitting. We've sort of graduated from what we used to do. It's time for something a little different." We can still dream.



“When you try to create something it takes a couple of tries **until you're really satisfied**”

YOSHIKI OKAMOTO



WORDS OF WISDOM

So, you've made a few hit games that were a smash in your native country and in the west. It's likely you've picked up a few things in your time. Here are some general thoughts Okamoto shared with us about the games industry.

"Games have changed a lot in the last 10 years. To come up with a game that is accepted is maybe not as different. Being creative is still the same, so it depends on how you look at it.

"When you create a series like *Street Fighter* you take apart the previous game, you recreate it to what it was and you add a little bit more, and the little more is where the creative comes in. It's 95 per cent the same. Creating a game like *Clash* (see p42), you're starting from scratch so whatever your 100 per cent is, it's all creative. As a creator it's a lot more encouraging and exciting.

"It's almost impossible to create a trend. It's a matter of being able to use your know how and how much that matches the trend in the industry. The trends are going to change, and at one point the way your concepts may fit, they may not. The ultimate goal is for users to be satisfied with what they're playing, not to be playing 24 hours a day, seven days a week, they don't see friends, they just play and play and play. The overall satisfaction you get from playing any game is the probably the most important thing.

"What I want to emphasise is, it's fun to play by yourself and other people. There are some games that are not too bad by yourself and a LOT of fun with other people. A game has to be fun when playing by yourself and with other people. That's the direction [we want to go in].

"I like the online co-op in games. That's one of the things I want to build on in the future."

“It's almost impossible to create a trend”

YOSHIKI OKAMOTO



WAGONS: WEST

During the Tokyo Games Show (TGS) last year, one of Okamoto's ex-colleagues, Keiji Inafune said he thought the Japanese gaming scene was dead. Ouch. "I agree," said Okamoto. That's surprising. "Well, Japanese games aren't dead, but we are on a down curve and I know the reasons. Japanese game creators were Japanese kids; they're used to Japanese games. Western games — like the *GTA* series — are not tremendous hits in Japan because the creators play Japanese games. The creators now are gamers that were Japanese gamers who grew up and became game creators. For them to create Western-accepted games is a difficult task for them to adapt to."

STUDIO

Vending machines are everywhere in Japan, but we were surprised to see these two in Game Republic that serve both cold and hot drinks to the hard working employees who have as much stuff on their desks as we do on ours. (Right) A model of the Majin.



Tepeu's armed with a stake that was used to pin the Majin down for 100 years, but Teotl is the means to the end with his brute strength. As you scamper around the levels, you'll have to entice The Darkness into areas where you can either trap them with environmental objects, whether it's a stone door, or a wall the Majin pushes on to them. You may even have to beat the snot out of them.

As Tepeu takes damage, his body is taken over by the goop that flies off The Darkness when you hit them. We saw the thick, black oil-like substance spatter his legs, before the Majin is able to cleanse him by inhaling the stuff. Once The Darkness are subdued, they become a purple orb that must be absorbed by Teotl otherwise they'll spring back to life.

Although you don't directly control your Majin, you do issue commands. We saw Teotl get the Majin to move a catapult around a stage before Teotl climbed in and be flung to a higher level. His arms flailed in the air as he yelled before thudding on to the rock. Once up there, he was trying to find a lever that would open a door, as well as various fruits that unleash the Majin's powers.

A chunk of your time is spent apart from each other as you search the level for levers to pull and ways to get the Majin through and for

him to open doors for you, though the physical distance between you isn't enormous. The combat element brings the two of you together as you both rely on the other to help: the Majin fights, and Teotl replenishes his health.

Lever located, the Majin blunders through the open door way and we're on to an area heavily populated with The Darkness. It's probably more than the two can take on. A bell on the ground can be used to attract The Darkness, and from Teotl's vantage point he's able to deftly throw a rock to attract their attention. The Darkness's eyes turn red, alerted to the sound and rush into the enclosed area before a door behind them slams shut.

"The main point is to be able to love your character, and situations in the game that allow you to do that are key aspects in trying to get a more emotional engagement," reiterates Okamoto. It's not just a philosophy for *Majin*, but all of GR's games. Applying this to *Majin*, Teotl is lovable. He'll bend down for you to jump on his back to haul yourself to a ledge out of reach, and if you jump on his head he'll scratch his head or moan. His speech is laboured, stuttering. The team haven't finalised the English subtitles but we're told it'll be something like "Me do that" or "I go there" rather than long prosaic speech.

Your interaction with the world isn't limited to the Majin. Tepeu is able to talk to small animals and these creatures that will explain the backstory throughout your time in the game. It's a bright world, and the screens here show that off. While it doesn't have the pace of something like *God of War*, it's undeniably handsome with a day cycle that affects which enemies you'll see.

Majin shows a lot of promise. It highlights the emotion possible in videogames that don't involve shooting something. However, if Okamoto left Capcom because he was tired of sequels, will this be the only time we'll see Tepeu and Teotl?

"It's not that I don't want to make games in a series," he says. "When you try to create something it takes a couple of tries until you're really satisfied with what you've made so you make something, you evolve it to something better, to a point that it's something you wanted to create." 🐉



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Survive this apocalyptic
in the remains of
San Geyl



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Hands-on with the
super-powered sequel



INFO

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DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR NORTH | **PLAYERS:** 1-16

GRAND THEFT AUTO: EPISODES FROM LIBERTY CITY

Liberty for all. Finally

It reportedly cost the House That Bill Gates Built US\$50 million to secure both *GTA/IV* expansion packs as Xbox 360 exclusives. That's not the kind of coin you find wedged between the handbrake and the seatbelt buckle. That's serious cash money. It's a boatload to drop on two exclusives that have turned out to be anything but.

"Where the *GTA/IV* experience stops on other platforms, it continues on Xbox 360," said then-Microsoft VP Peter Moore some years back. "This will make Xbox 360 the only console where you can get the complete *Grand Theft Auto IV* experience."

Well, except for PS3.

But we digress.

Grand Theft Auto: Episodes from Liberty City IS the complete *GTA/IV* experience – or, at least, the second half of it. The two follow-up tales here provide all the extra insight you'll need to see all the loose ends from *GTA/IV* tied up – specifically, what happened to those troublesome diamonds. Better yet, in many ways they're even better than *GTA/IV*. Niko remains a truly memorable protagonist, but the new characters in *Episodes from Liberty City* are just as layered and entertaining. More importantly, however, the tweaks to the existing formula (plus a healthy haul of new content) makes *Episodes from Liberty City* an even richer gameplay experience than its forebear.

The first chapter, *The Lost & Damned*, casts you as Johnny Klebitz – a bikie gang

veteran who finds himself torn between his loyalty to violent club president Billy Grey and the more sensible business opportunities he's been creating in Billy's absence. *TLAD* is all about (large packs of) motorcycles, (frequent) turf wars and the true gritty underbelly of LC.

The second chapter, *The Ballad of Gay Tony*, is completely different. Luis Lopez, right-hand man to long-time Liberty City nightclub mogul Tony Prince (aka Gay Tony) must set about keeping the business afloat when mounting debts see the worst of LC come knocking. *TBOGT* is about over-the-top missions, no-expense-spared hardware, sex and glamour.

The key difference between each of these episodes at the original *GTA/IV* is the way they're presented. In *GTA/IV* you were

THE PITCH

The incredible expansions to one of the best-selling and most universally-acclaimed games of all time come to PS3. What Xbox 360 exclusive?





42 CLASH OF THE TITANS
Can it topple Kratos at his own game?



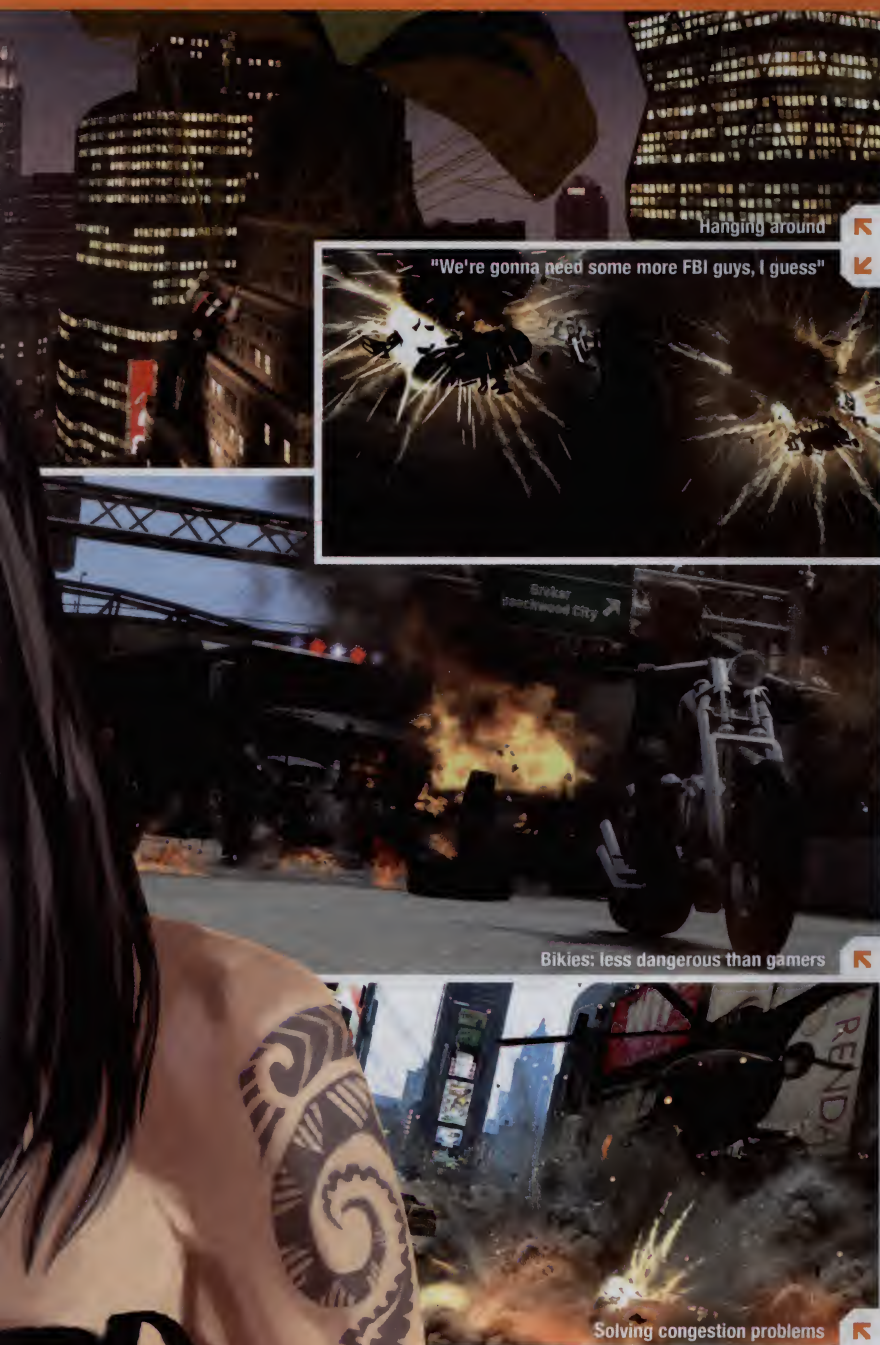
44 JUST CAUSE 2
Taking unhinged action to the limit and beyond!



46 L.A. NOIRE
New details on the epic, new British period made us in Sydney!



➔ **SUVs: Dangerous for more than one reason**



Hanging around

"We're gonna need some more FBI guys, I guess"

Bikies: less dangerous than gamers

Solving congestion problems

The 10 Best Things About GTA: Episodes from Liberty City



Chopper vs. Chopper (TLAD)

It's helicopter versus motorcycle, and it's the greatest fun two people can have without stripping down and going to town on the photocopier during the office Christmas party.



The Buzzard (TBOGT)

The Buzzard is an ultra-maneuvrable light helicopter with incredible stopping power. Bristling with missile pods and a minigun it mauls anything in its path. Oh, and there are parachutes now. So you can jump out.



Parachutes (TBOGT)

Yep, parachutes. Trimmed from the offering post-GTA: San Andreas for reasons beyond us, parachutes are back and they're better than ever. Bailing out, BASE jumping – all back on the cards.



The APC (TBOGT)

Heavily-armoured and packing a cannon that will stop anything the city throws at you, the APC (or NOOSE tank, as Luis refers to it) is one of the greatest additions to the GTAIV universe.



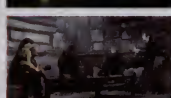
Yusuf Amir (TBOGT)

TBOGT is our pick for best cast. Tony himself, main man Luis, Bruce from GTAIV – but Yusuf Amir is the funniest GTA character ever. Iranian stand-up comic Omid Djalili is perfect as the eccentric Arab billionaire.



Advanced MG (TBOGT)

Belt-fed, fully automatic and *fully awesome*. Standing in the middle of the street and emptying a full can into a vehicle is something to see. Windows, tyres, panels – all blown to bits with no reloading.



The Lost HQ (TLAD)

Your home in GTA has never been much more than a save hub for us, but The Lost HQ is something more. It's just got so much character. Rows of hogs lining the kerb outside, heavy metal and strippers inside – what a place.



Explosive Shotgun (TBOGT)

Equipped with explosive shells, the Explosive Shotgun will polish off most opponents with one blast. It's also hugely effective against vehicles – two hits are usually enough to set it alight.



New music (TLAD & TBOGT)

Rolling with your fellow bikies to the strains of Bon Jovi's 'Wanted: Dead or Alive'? Cruising through Star Junction with Farnsie's 'You're The Voice' crackling through the stereo? Brilliant.



Pushing the Envelope (TLAD & TBOGT)

Full-frontal male nudity? Check. Sex scenes? Check. The coffee is hotter than ever in *Episodes from Liberty City*, but thankfully the world seems to have removed the sand from its vagina.

a stranger in LC, seeing everything and meeting everyone for the first time. In *TLAD* and *TBOGT* you're an LC veteran – a true local. You know the town and you already have a phone stuffed full of contacts. Johnny Klebitz has the might and resources of The Lost, and Luis Lopez has the cash and connections of a real player. The dynamic is totally different.

The areas the action is concentrated is also fresh. The Lost are based in Alderney, and Gay Tony's nightclubs are located in Algonquin. Each episode will take you to many areas totally unused by *GTAIV*; places you probably never noticed the first time around. That the environment never seems stale is a reflection of just how rich, complex and ever-changing a place LC is.

The best bit? You don't even need your *GTAIV* disc to play it. **— Luke Reilly**

THEY SAY

"We appreciate the patience of our PlayStation 3 worldwide, and we look forward to putting the games in your hands this March"

WE SAY

It wasn't an easy wait, and many will have moved on – but there's no denying that *Episodes from Liberty City* will be a crucial purchase.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
					✗



INCOMING

YOU
GOTTA
JUMP!

So, you're given a Vault 21 jumpsuit from the get-go. It sounds remarkably like *21 Jump Street* to us. Just saying.

INFO

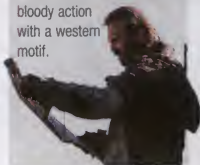
FORMAT: PS3 | EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI
PARTNERS | DEVELOPER: OBSIDIAN | PLAYERS: 1

FALLOUT NEW VEGAS

What happens in Vegas might just save your skin

THE PITCH

Fallout 3 meets *Unforgiven* meets *The Postman*. Tactical bloody action with a western motif.



Grenade machine gun. Just let that roll around your tongue for a while. It's possibly on par with the 'shotgun battleaxe' in *Darkwatch*, or *Borderlands'* acid sniper rifle for title of 'most batshit crazy weapon' ever named. It's even better than *Fallout 3's* nuclear catapult, and it's something you'll wish had existed since videogames were invented. It's featured here in *Fallout New Vegas*, and it makes more mess than you can possibly imagine.

A clarification: this isn't DLC for *Fallout 3*, nor is it *Fallout 4*. *New Vegas* is a brand new game in the same universe of the critically acclaimed shooter-cum-RPG that's going to give fans more of what they like, while hopefully raking in a few more followers.

Set three years after the events of *Fallout 3*, you're seeing the world through the eyes of a courier on the way to *New Vegas* to deliver a package. As you're getting close to the desert city a group of thugs ambushed you, leaving

you for dead in the desert before you're found by Victor, a robot, and nursed back to health in the town of Goodsprings. And that's about the only thing you know about your character when the game starts.

That means there's no secret underground vault. But the Pip-Boy – the glorious wrist mounted VDU that tells you everything about you need to know about your situation – returns, bestowed upon you by the doctor, Doc Mitchell who puts your face back together. Your mission, then, is threefold; find out who killed you, why, and what was in the package.

Since your face has been all but blown off you get the chance to craft your character's mug using the familiar sliders, and also your personality traits with a Rorschach ink test and a word association game, which is much like the GOAT from 3 (one of the ink blots looks a lot like two bears giving each other a high five). You're also able to twiddle your stats if you're not totally happy with the end result and pick

your SPECIAL abilities, such as 'charisma' or 'strength'. Finally, you're let out into the world, armed with a weapon and a Vault 21 jumpsuit.

The equipment you're given depends on what skills you highlighted in the previous tests. If you're an explosives wizard you'll be given, for examples, grenades. Those feeling keen can set the difficulty straight to 'Hardcore' that makes things more realistic. Stimpacks – your healthpicks – heal you over time rather than instantaneously, as does Rad Away – the radiation antidote. Plus ammo has weight, so you have to plan your journeys rather than wandering around with a gazillion minigun bullets. Since you're in the desert, dehydration is a concern and it's essential you have a water source, the less contaminated the better. Hardcore mode can be switched on and off, but keep it on for the whole game and you'll be rewarded come endgame.

When you do step outside, the town of Goodsprings itself is different from the



➤ Audio cue: Dueling banjos

wastelands of DC. The atomic bombs weren't dropped here for reasons that unfold in-game, so the town set in the Mojave desert is more dilapidated rather than destroyed: the sky doesn't have a 'nuclear winter' look, and there's also vegetation to make the distinction even more apparent.

The town of Goodsprings has a problem: the Powder Keg gang who are going to tear the place to shreds unless they get their hands on a traveller called Ringo. This is *Fallout*, so it's up to you whether you want to help the town or the gang. Getting the town to face up to the gang, though, means you'll have to persuade a bunch of people to take to arms. Conversations now have a skill marked next to them that will help you get what you want. So, if you want to take the explosives from one of the town's stalwarts, Easy Pete, you'll need to be either very charismatic or have ace explosives skills to convince him you're not going to put a hole in the earth right where his beloved town is.

Save the town, and your Reputation goes up. Although Karma still has a role, your rep dictates your relationship with different factions and goes some way in dictating the ending you see. It's also possible have two factions facing off against one another for your own benefits.

Weapons can be modified with scopes, larger magazines and whatnot, but the changes are more than just stats based. Strap a bigger clip onto your pistol and you can actually see it in first and third-person modes, adding to the immersion. The possibilities for whack-o mods are tantalising.

Companions can be more easily directed via the Companion wheel. You'll be able to direct them to follow/stay, go into battle, open their inventory, be passive or aggressive, and so on.



"You're gonna die, CLOWN!"



There could be more vegetation here if they watered the plants with electrolytes

While the similarities are obvious, this is shaping up to be a great sequel. It's more streamlined than 3, but it packs enough wit and minor improvements to make it worth stepping outside into a post-apocalyptic future again. Haters will still hate and that's their loss, but the fence sitters among you may now have a definite side to stand on. **Paul Taylor**

OBSID.I.AN.

Obsidian is developing this time around, rather than Bethesda themselves. The mighty B is working on other titles – a new *Elder Scrolls* if we were going to place a bet – but the guys who comprise Obsidian are ex-Black Isle Studios; the guys who made the original *Fallout* PC games. There won't be a direct link to *New Vegas* though we wouldn't be surprised if there are a few Easter eggs tucked away in there.

“Put a hole in the earth right where his beloved town is”



Second worst case of explosive diarrhoea we've ever seen

THEY SAY

"Takes all the action, humour, and post-apocalyptic grime and grit of this legendary series, and raises the stakes"

WE SAY

It's a worthwhile companion piece to *Fallout 3* that ought to hook in newbies and veterans alike. It's funny, deep in action and story and will, no doubt, absorb hours.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
				✗	

INCOMING



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** APRIL 30 | **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM | **PLAYERS:** 1-2

SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

You're the best. Around. Nothin's ever gonna keep you down

The leap from *Street Fighter II* to 'Super' *Street Fighter II* came with a heavy kick combo that swept us off our feet and put us in stars. The 1993 sequel opened our gaming gromit eyes to the beauty of the Super Bar and combos. The move to the CPS II arcade board offered us sharper, more vibrant visuals. Last, but not least, the roster was expanded to include Fei Long, T. Hawk, Maximum Pants (or 'Dee Jay', as some of you may know him) and Cammy. Historically, she represented the first time any of us beheld a G-string in all its wedge glory. Long story short; we liked what we saw with that particular 'superfication'.

It therefore makes us proud (and old, and crusty) to report that, after 17 years since the first *Super* translation, the jump from 'regular' *Street Fighter IV* to *Super Street Fighter IV* is looking just as momentous. The sequel aims to build on *SF IV* by adding new content which includes more playable characters, improved online code, and a much needed rebalancing of some existing characters (take a bow, Sagat).

On top of this, *SSF IV* will feature several new online game modes including a Team Battle Mode where four players can take on

another four online, Endless Battle Mode where players queue to challenge the current 'king of the hill' (who, nine times out of 10, will be a Japanese kid half our age). Anyone who loses to this king will get sent to the back of the queue. There is also a new Replay Mode, although how this differs from the current Replay system is unclear.

New bells and whistles in single-player include the return of much beloved – yet utterly pointless – bonus stages where you must race against the clock to pulverise innocent barrels or detail somebody's car with your fists. With all of this wanton destruction of public property it's a goddamned sin that Haggar isn't featured in this game (other than a statue cameo).

While the great moustachioed one doesn't make an appearance we can tell you that the two next best things have come along – Cody and Guy. Along with these old-school vigilantes you may also count on T. Hawk, Juri, and Adon showing up as well. Old-school pugilists Ibuki, Makoto and Dudley will also make a return, plus a new character named Hakan, an Arabic grappler who is "obsessed with oil". Disturbing.

Adam Mathew

THE PITCH

Street Fighter IV with all of the characters and DLC costumes we should have seen included the first time – and so much MORE!



Pro tip: headbutt fireballs to WIN



Gravity is optional

THEY SAY

"The follow-up to the critically acclaimed *Street Fighter IV* will further redefine the fighting game genre"

WE SAY

Extra characters, refined existing characters and a free holiday to Metro City? What's not to like? We mean, aside from the fact Haggar isn't in it?

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
				✗	

Pictured: some Guy, we guess





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INCOMING

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | EXPECTED RELEASE: TBC 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI
PARTNERS | DEVELOPER: GAME REPUBLIC | PLAYERS: 1-2

CLASH OF THE TITANS

It's time to Kraken roll

It's amazing just how robust sandals must have been back in the days of gods and monsters. Perseus, bastard child of Zeus, is scurrying around a dusty battlefield in little more than a pair of sandals, a skirt and a sheet of metal to protect himself from the wrath of beasties weapons and extremities. When he has chance to stop he draws his bow back and aims for the eye of the Cyclops, its weak point, as the huge mythological freak bears down on him. It doesn't take him long to weaken the man-beast and enter the 'chance state'.

The chance state is a moment that adds a visual effect to the goings-on, and a prompt will indicate that's the time to steal the boss's weapon. It's not a QTE, though, being

more about timing than pressing the right button as you won't have to follow a certain sequence, just hit the pad before the chance state ends. Get it right and you'll be able to mount your foe and disarm it in a brutal fashion. Fail, and you'll have to work hard to earn another chance state.

We're privy to a number of these boss battles, and each gets larger and larger, many descending into the lore of Greek heroes with more than a dash of original creation. As the

dev team show off some of the more mighty creatures, a giant scorpion is felled, then a monstrous sand serpent that looks like the mutant cousin of the invertebrate you toyed with as a kid – if it was 20 storeys tall and had spikes for teeth. We're also promised the Medusa, as well as a Basilisk (a serpent that can kill you dead with just a glance) and a two-headed dog that will require more than a rabies shot if it gets its teeth around your thigh. The common theme in this third-person action-adventure is that each boss's weapon can be stolen to use against it and lower-level enemies.

All up we're promised close to 100 different enemies, though we're unsure of the ratio of bosses to normal foes – if you count living skeletons, vicious frogs and that type of thing 'normal' – and some of the non-boss characters have weapons or parts of their body that can be thieved and re-appropriated into weapons. Perseus, for example, will be able to lop off the scorpion's tail and wield it like a brutal whip. A harpy's wings can be used, we imagine, for a wind-based attack.

The ability to pinch weapons makes up a core part of the game; Game Republic promise that you'll be able to steal nearly 80 weapons and that much of the gameplay comes in trying to get them all. They're all separated into 12

different categories and you'll be able to access four of them on the fly as they're mapped to the

THE PITCH

The attitude of *God of War's* boss battles meets a Greek version of Russell Crowe's *Gladiator*.





Don't worry, he's actually a big pussy



Honk if you're horny



"Get flocked!"



his screen is like Sam Worthington. So hot right now



Why did the cyclops schoolteacher quit? Because he only had one pupil

“The ability to pinch weapons makes up a core part of the game”

fair pace. Perseus is pretty nimble, and the beasties he goes up against are well detailed and animated. His charge attacks are visually splendid, illuminating the environment as he prepares to gamble accuracy with power. The music is naught but stirring, a grand orchestra adding to the frenzy on screen. Cinematics, which punctuate the action, are well produced. The script itself? That comes straight from the movie.

Clash is based on the upcoming film, which itself is a remake of the 1981 classic made brash and starring Sam Worthington in the lead role of Perseus. Despite being part of the license, Game Republic were given free reign over the action and the game's plot.

The team had an engine that was capable of making an action game, and they heard about *Clash of the Titans*. After pitching for it and going through a few meetings with Warner Bros. they got the go ahead and were both given the script and blessing to create an action game that they saw met the spirit of the movie.

What this means is that *Clash* is more than just a movie-game tie in. While the story of the game matches the storyline of the upcoming flick – as well as featuring a few of

IT TAKES TWO

At specific parts in your adventure your couch bound mate will be able to plug in a second DualShock and take one of Perseus's pals into battle. These support characters would otherwise be controlled by the AI, so this co-op mode is a more cream than sponge. Their moves will be limited – they won't be able to seize weapons for example – but are essential to your success. If they die, whether you or the AI control them, you'll be sent back to the nearest checkpoint.

the better known lines from the '81 original – it also expands into side quests without it being an 'origins' story. Many of the monsters and weapons in *Clash* (the game) are original creations, while the main characters are modelled on their movie counterparts, albeit with a few tweaks here and there (unfortunately Game Republic were unable to get the actors to read the script for the game). Different stages in-game are based upon locations in the movie with a bundle more made just for this title.

We're interested to what is going to be more involving: the game or the movie. The Game Republic guys have put a lot of thought into expanding the universe and lore and it's ticked the boxes for action titles: lots of weapons, lots of action, outrageous bosses that dwarf the player. Their 'seize' mechanic adds a suitable twist to the gameplay, as you're constantly balancing your soul level with the use of awesome and unique weapons. Though it feels like more of a revolution than evolution, we want to get hands on *Clash* to see how it stacks up against the might of Kratos and Dante. **Paul Taylor**

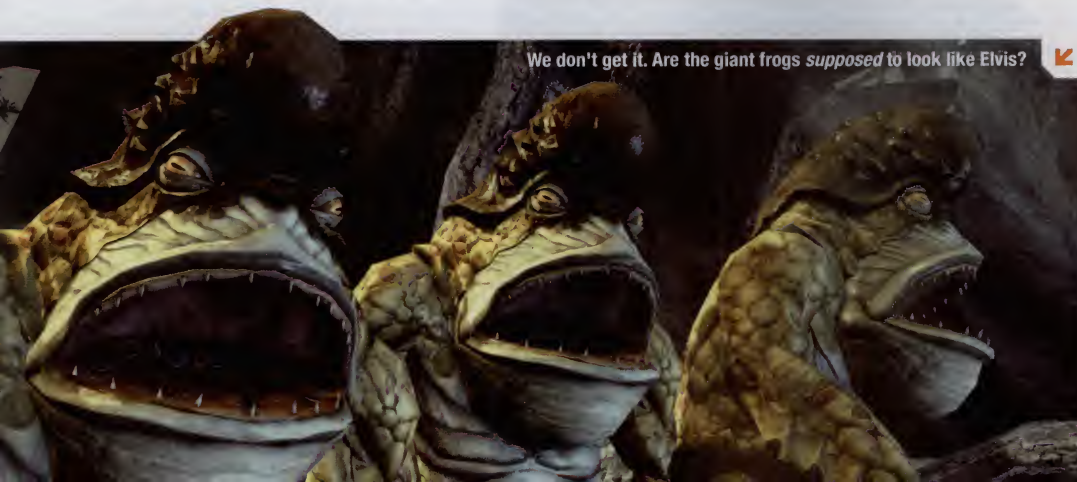
THEY SAY

"An unprecedented style of action-adventure game play will arm players with an ever-changing arsenal of weapons and powers"

WE SAY

The seize manoeuvres are a neat twist and it's impressive for a game loosely based on a movie, but we're not so sure it's capable of decide.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
		✗			



We don't get it. Are the giant frogs supposed to look like Elvis?

INCOMING

“The next thing we tried was airlifting a motorcycle to the strip club zeppelin”

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | EXPECTED RELEASE: APRIL 12 | DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI
PARTNERS | DEVELOPER: AVALANCHE | PLAYERS: 1

JUST CAUSE 2

Welcome to paradise

THE PITCH

Take the first *Just Cause* and make it do just about everything it wanted to do the first time around. Mayhem on a disc.

We've had a preview version of *Just Cause 2* in the office for a month now. We've dabbled in some of the missions, and everything seems in order. After a few hours we thought we had a good feeling on all that *Just Cause 2* had to offer.

And then we started messing around.

First, we discovered huge aerial strip club, suspended beneath two large blimps. It's called The Mile High Club, but we immediately dubbed it the strip club zeppelin and spent the next few hours messing with it. We'd fly up to it in a plane or chopper, bail out and grapple onto some point of the structure. Then we'd cause a ruckus – grappling two strippers together and such – and vanish over the edge, parachuting to safety. After nosing around a little more on the

stripper zeppelin itself we found it actually had its own helipad, so we could land rather than leap from an aircraft to board the club. But not only that, it also had its own landing strip – equipped with a small business jet – so we could fly off the zeppelin when we were done.

But we didn't stop there.

The next thing we tried was airlifting a motorcycle to the strip club zeppelin. You can do this by grappling a motorcycle to a chopper and simply flying away. It'll remain attached to your chopper until you press the grapple button again and it disconnects. We deposited the motorcycle on the landing strip and ditched the chopper. Then we hopped in the jet, gave it the beans and quickly dove out. The jet continued to coast along and disappeared over the lip of



Zip from aircraft to aircraft, in mid-air...

...or just blast them out of the sky



the short runway. The idea was to hop onto the bike, and chase it over the edge – *GoldenEye*-style. The result looked spectacular, but it ultimately didn't work because we messed up our attempt to zipline to the falling jet.

The point, however, is that it *could* have worked. At one point we called in for an airdrop. The piece of equipment we'd requested, in this case, was a special prototype jet. Unfortunately for us, we were standing on a slope at the time and the moment the plane touched the ground it began to roll away from us. It rolled straight off the side of a cliff, but we chased it over the drop, fired a grapple into it and zipped to the cockpit, entered the plane and desperately mashed the throttle and yanked the stick back. The plane pulled up metres from the jungle canopy, and we flew away. This is not an idle anecdote we made up. In *Just Cause 2*, this can and will go down.

As far as game tools go, they don't come much better than *Just Cause 2*'s grappling hook. If there's something you think you ought



Kill everyone inside and the car's yours! Ahem



Q&A WITH TOBIAS HAGBERG

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER AT AVALANCHE FOR *JUST CAUSE 2*

How long has *Just Cause 2* been in development for?

We've passed three and a half years now. We started *Just Cause 2* before finishing *Just Cause*, which had a long cycle because of the Xbox 360 version.

Was there anything that you wanted to put into *Just Cause 2* that didn't make it in there?

There are always ideas that don't make it to the game. We had a lot of ideas, like using the grappling hook to leech electricity, stuff like that.

The Strip Club Zeppelin: discuss.

(laughs) Well, we did the volcano last time around – we had a brothel in an active volcano in *Just Cause* – so we had to top that, obviously! If there is a *Just Cause 3* we'll see what we can come up with.

What's your favourite part of *Just Cause 2*?

Apart from the strip club you mean? I'm really proud of the grappling hook, the way you can interact and play with it. The gas canisters [where you hook onto a canister and launch yourself like a rocket]: those are a lot of fun. It wasn't actually planned, it just kinda happened when the developer started playing around with it. The wrecking ball thing, you attach a car to the bottom of a helicopter, using it to smash everything is cool. You can actually detach the hook any time you like, so you can fly around with a car and drop it, so you can use it as a bomb.

Can you cause an unlimited amount of Chaos, or is there a limited population to put a cap on the Chaos generated?

You get Chaos by destroying enemies and their vehicles, and we have an infinite number of those spawning around in the world, so yes you could cause an infinite amount, but there is a limit to missions.

Can we expect any multiplayer or online co-op?

Sorry, not at all. The main reason was the single player game was really, really big and it was very advanced with the grappling hook stuff and other features we wanted to do, so basically we didn't have time without sacrificing something from the single player campaign. We weren't willing to do that trade off. But, if we had worked for another three years (laughs). Just kidding. We had to redo a lot from *Just Cause* since that was done on the previous generation of console; a lot of technical stuff, better AI, grappling hook etc.

to be able to do, chances are this magic device can make it happen. We made off with a mid-sized passenger jet from Panau's international airport for no other reason than to tool around the sky in something massive. Tucking in behind a business jet, however, we clambered to the 'stunt position' on top of the fuselage, fired one end of the grapple into the spine of the passenger jet and other into the business jet. The result was instantaneous. We scrambled back into the cockpit of our plane as the other jet was yanked off course and tugged through the sky like a redheaded stepchild during a sugar tantrum. Not before long, both planes spiralled out of control, so we punched out.

It's just boggling the kind of fun you can have in this game. There's no real reason why you should be able to tether yourself to the blades of a giant wind turbine – but you can. We watched the world spiral until we were about to upchuck and jumped off. The only reason we did it in the first place was because we could.

That's freedom. **Luke Reilly**

THEY SAY

"Using a unique grapple and parachute combination, there is no vertical limit as the air becomes your playground"

WE SAY

People aren't going to remember this game for the missions, they're going to remember it for the batshit crazy stunts you can pull. This is fun. Big fun.



INCOMING



Going for the sack

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA | DISTRIBUTOR: TUFFKAT
DEVELOPER: NATURALMOTION | PLAYERS: 1-2

BACKBREAKER

Little bit of pain never hurt anyone...

Our history with *Backbreaker* has been a roller coaster ride of emotion. When we first heard the name we were overjoyed that someone was actually making a game based on a chiropractor pushed too far by local street punks. Then we heard it was just about American football. This newfound depression ratcheted right back up to excitement when we saw that *Backbreaker's* main drawcard is ridiculously violent tackles. As long as somebody gets hurt, we're happy.

Backbreaker is developed by NaturalMotion, the company that developed the Euphoria game animation engine. Most of us are already familiar with Euphoria, as it was used extensively in *GTA IV* and *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed*. Essentially, Euphoria animates characters on-the-fly, based on a full simulation of a 3D person with a body, muscle structure and a nervous system.

Long story short, it translates into some of the most realistic king-hits you'll see this side of your family reunion. *Backbreaker* makes the experience especially visceral by having a camera that focuses right down on the player in possession, rather than the field as a whole. NaturalMotion have also confirmed two-person split-screen multiplayer. Music to our ears.

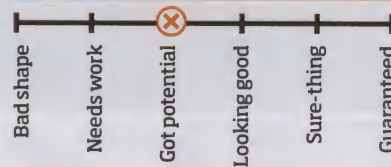
The fluidity and pace of *Backbreaker* are certainly headed for a touchdown. Let's just hope that this unproven studio can adequately tackle the challenge of building a decent game around the tech. Zero team licenses is going to work hard against this. **Adam Mathew**

THEY SAY

"Repetitive, canned animations are a thing of the past. Fans are eager for something new, and *Backbreaker* will blow them away"

WE SAY

Why, oh why, do they keep moving the goalposts on the term 'next-gen'? Just when we think 'next-gen' is 'current-gen', some genius comes along and does this.



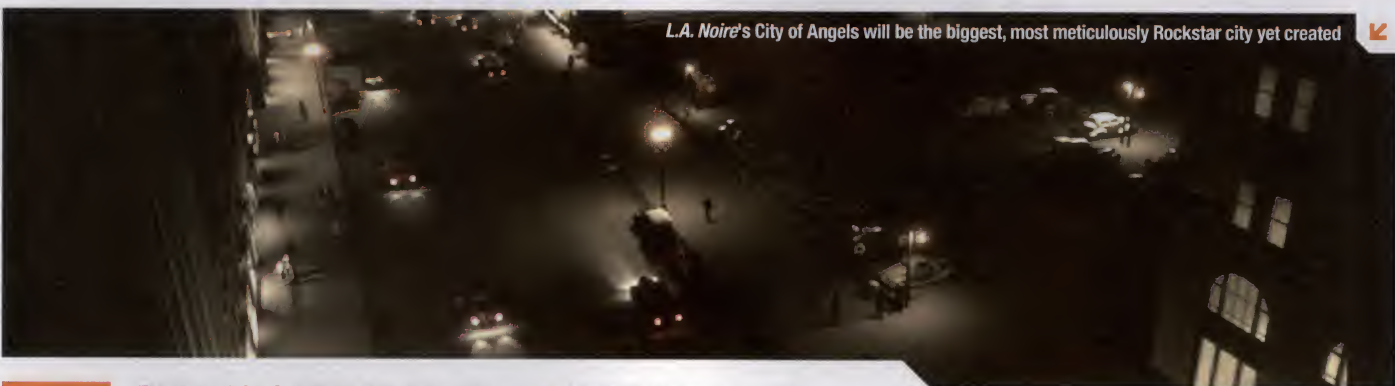
THE PITCH

Hey kids! Break backs like nature intended (with Euphoria-based rortings that mimic real-life).



"You can DO IT!"

L.A. Noire's City of Angels will be the biggest, most meticulously Rockstar city yet created



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA | DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR
DEVELOPER: TEAM BONDI | PLAYERS: TBA

L.A. NOIRE

Back when L.A. was cool

THE PITCH

A 1940s detective drama set in a ludicrously detailed L.A. *LA Confidential* meets *The Getaway*.



Believing hype is like pulling the trigger on a gun, a binary choice. Either you will, or you won't. Scepticism is usually our first reaction, but when Team Bondi announced its intentions to perfectly re-create 1940s Los Angeles with 'amazing new technology', a swarm of phantom mosquitos bit our index finger. The reflexes did the rest.

Announced a lifetime ago, *L.A. Noire* was slated to be the maiden voyage of Team Bondi. But for some reason the boat never

cast off. *L.A. Noire* went underground and made like a mime. Only recently have we been able to pick up on its trail again.

As the title suggests, the game draws heavily from both the plot and aesthetic elements of film noir; stylish Hollywood crime dramas that emphasise cynical attitudes and sexual motivations. Which says 'yes' to us.

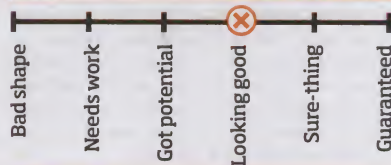
Darker tone is always appreciated, but the most impressive feature is the way real-life actors are being employed. 32 stereo-matched cameras capture the face of a live actor from every angle imaginable. Once a performance is recorded, the dialogue, eye movement, and facial expressions are used seamlessly in the game. Thanks to Team Bondi's new technique, the collected data then goes through a process that generates fully animated 3D faces from movie footage. We've never seen anything like this before. This could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship. **Adam Mathew**

THEY SAY

"Set in a perfectly recreated Los Angeles before freeways, with a post-war backdrop of corruption, drugs and jazz"

WE SAY

This whole concept is brimming with win. The idea of a human face producing a superior performance makes utter sense to us. Team Bondi is making us all patriotic.



SPEC OPS: THE LINE

War in a sandstorm is gritty



It's all \$ signs for Nolan North

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA | **DISTRIBUTOR:** 2K GAMES
DEVELOPER: YAGER DEVELOPMENT | **PLAYERS:** TBA

THE PITCH

Duke it out as Delta Force in a demolished Dubai. Mind the killer sandstorms – and the bullets, of course.



Pro survival tip: when the chips are down and the crap is meteorizing towards the fan, you really ought to start listening to the dude who sounds like Nolan North. This time around, that chap is Captain Martin Walker; an elite Delta Force squad leader sent into a post-apocalyptic Dubai to rescue the allitericious Colonel Konrad.

Once wealthy Dubai has been knee-dropped by Mother Nature thanks to catastrophic winds reducing the city to a sandbox environment – literally. There's more sand in here than your butt crack after a surf, and the situation has forced most people to evacuate. When the Army later detects a weak distress signal they deploy Walker and a squad to infiltrate the lawless city and discover the true fate of Konrad and his forces.

The Line differs from other third-person, squad-based shooters by employing sandstorms that provide dynamic terrain-changing gameplay, similar to titles like *Red*

Faction and *Fracture*. This is achieved via an unpredictable engine that randomises where and when a storm will occur, as well as how insane it will be (the scale goes from 'Slight Breeze' to 'Adios, Kansas').

If newcomer Yager Development can live up to its claim of having sandstorms that open or close level paths and affect the balance of firefights we'll be the first ones to strap on some goggles, put 'Enter Sandman' on repeat, and dive in. **Adam Mathew**



THEY SAY

"*Spec Ops: The Line* is a provocative and gripping third-person modern military shooter that challenges players' morality"

WE SAY

What we've seen looks very impressive indeed. Why then did you have to spoil the moment by reminding us of the previous eight *Spec Ops* games?

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
		⊗			

"Look, I'm giving a cigarette to a baby," muttered the blatant French stereotype



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** MID 2010 | **DISTRIBUTOR:** TUFFKAT
DEVELOPER: MILESTONE | **PLAYERS:** 1-MULTI

THE PITCH

A proper rally game, like the ones developers used to make last generation. Finally.



WRC

Leaving DiRT for dust?

It pains us to say it, but the best rally games have come and gone. *Colin McRae Rally 2.0*, *V-Rally 2*, *WRC Rally Evolved* – it's unfortunate, but all the truly good rally games are behind us. But perhaps not forever.

Black Bean Games has picked up the rights for the WRC series and is producing

a fully-fledged title dedicated to one of the world's most popular motorsports.

The list of features has everything we need. The real cars and the real drivers. Advanced tuning and cabin view. A "huge" career mode. We're listening.

It'll also feature 13 different locations from around the world, which we're certain will follow the 2010 season. This means we'll see Sweden, Mexico, Jordan, Turkey, New Zealand, Portugal, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Japan, France, Spain, and Great Britain. Unlike current off-road darling *DiRT 2*, there are a lot of key rallying countries here, like Finland, and particularly Sweden. We

look forward to getting back on snow – it's been too long. That Codies has relased two 'rally' games without a flake of snow is just taking the piste. Australia doesn't feature in the 2010 calendar, but it's tipped it will in 2011, rotating with NZ. We're also tipping there'll be a sequel.

Codies deliberately pitched *DiRT 2* as "the antithesis of the boring World Rally Championship annual tour". It must suck for them that even Ken Block has put on his race face and just joined it. Oops.

Assuming the game's up to chop, this is good news for people who admire Sébastien Loeb over Travis Pastrana, and Marcus Grönholm over someone who used to ride pushbikes for a living. **Luke Reilly**

THEY SAY

"Everything is designed to give the player the sensation of taking part in the real championship"

WE SAY

We're kind of excited about the possibilities here. The *DiRT* series just doesn't have the depth for us, or the credibility. We're very keen to see how this feels.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
		⊗			



INDEPTH

BULLETS ON PARADE

Bodycount: [*noun*] (1) The number of people killed in a battle or accident, or the process of counting them (2) The best name for a shooter we've heard, ever

WORDS: PAUL TAYLOR



GUNNING FOR IT

Your time in *Bodycount* is going to spent becoming intimate with your weaponry. However, that's not to say you won't be able to use some big boys toys. Think predator drones, helicopters and mobile sentry guns that, like the rest of the game, will be up close and personal. "Drones are f---king cool things!" says Black. "They're really big, they're much bigger than you think they are and they're like bricks that hang in the sky, and there's something cool about bricks that fly. We want to take that hardware and bring it down in your face and make it like your pet." Although there are co-op and multiplayer modes (see *Army of Boom*), jumping into vehicles is purposely ruled out. "You can direct it or let it go do it's own thing," explains Black. "You're a guy on the ground. It's not going to be a massive open world as it's all about the density of the experience."



The similarities with EA's *Black* are immediately apparent

that, miraculously, made it through the legal trademark hoops – by their art director Max Cant, who also worked on *Black* and *Burnout Paradise*. Andrew Wilson, ex-Black Rock studios – the team behind the upcoming *Split/Second* – is senior producer. Tom Gillo, who was game director at Sony Computer Entertainment London Studio, joins them as executive producer. It's possibly as close to a supergroup that gaming's going to have for a while, unless Hideo Kojima, Peter Molyneux, David Jaffe and Kazunori Yamauchi decide to join forces (in which case *Velvet Revolver* might just decide to do one more show).

One point that's constantly reinforced is that *Bodycount* is not a military shooter – the gritty shooter with the main man fighting

physics, politics, and storyline – that still has a basis in the real world.

"We're thinking of this as being the 'cool combat experience'," enthuses Black. "We want it to be very stylish and most particularly very modern. We want this game to feel like it's the bastard love child of Steve McQueen, Lady Ga Ga and J.J. Abrams. More than anything else we want to invoke an emotional response out of our audience." Ultimately, the whole experience will be propelled by a strong story with solid character development.

Set in the near future, you take the role of a 'combat asset', a man taking instruction from a group known only as The Network, a group fighting for control of the world against other networks. "As far as our network is concerned these are simply called 'The Target,'" says Black. "They are not us; they have to be put down and destroyed in any way possible. You are one type of assets used to do that: a combat asset. These are expendable units that are used to ensure successful outcomes through the elimination of key targets to do those assassination missions in scenarios where a high body count is expected in all the dangerous hot zones in the world. These way networks fight conflict is through change. They believe in the change of mankind..."

Here Black stumbles a touch. "This typical Nietzsche, neo-nazi type of attitude: they're all insane. There's not really 'good-guy, bad-guy'. There's bad guy, worse guy. You've got

“It's all about shooting that gun and the effect that has on the environment”

STUART BLACK

in drab environments, covered in sand has become a cliché say the team. "It's a very pure and focussed shooter," stresses Black. "We're not interested in on-rails driving sections or walking up walls and so on. It's all about shooting that gun and the effect that has on the environment." He and the team are also eschewing the real world and military doctrine or behaviour, opting for a fantasy – in

Stuart Black, creative director, is excited. Every sentence that erupts from the Scotsman's wiry frame as he talks about his new project screams 'headline'. "A pure focussed shooter!" "Unapologetic arcade action!" "All about the experience of shooting a gun!" It's possible that he's excited all the time, as from the moment we meet him until we leave Codemaster's studio in Guildford, a non-descript town 45 minutes out of London, it's like he's just landed back on the ground after a parachute jump.

He has reason to be. His latest project at Codemasters, *Bodycount*, is its first original IP in 10 years. By the time you read this, the shooter will have been in development for roughly three months, still blooming from its nine months in pre-production. It's in a state the team call 'pre-Alpha production', so what we're seeing is pretty fresh. Enthusiasm is high, though it looks like the team who are still incubating the idea are well used to Black's performance.

A quick history. Black, who hails from Dundee, Scotland, has a long history in games. He used to be at Criterion, the team behind *Burnout*, and before that the Creative Assembly and the legendary Bullfrog. One of his last big games was the rateable but flawed shooter, *Black*. Whether it's short for 'Black Ops' or an eponymous link is best left to a pub debate.

He's joined on *Bodycount* – a working title



Shoot to thrill, play to kill

to figure out which side you're on."

Giving you your commands are three female operatives who will only communicate with you through your earpiece. They'll swap in and out at random, giving you choices about the target you're going to destroy. Your decision to listen to one particular operative will impact the branching narrative and express who you are as a player. Because you don't physically meet them throughout the game it could be anyone speaking into your earpiece giving you orders. Black has deliberately made it ambiguous.

At the head of the organization is a guy known only as 'The Handler'. We're amused to see that for Codemasters' internal mood board he's embodied by Brian Cox. "He's warm, charming and evasive," explains Black, of The Handler. "He will say and do absolutely anything to make you kill whom he wants dead."

"Often in games people look at movies to structure a story. I don't think that's very applicable with games: their timelines don't really match up. A movie goes for – at best – two hours and that's really got to hold your attention, a game's eight to 15 hours or so. So in my mind that matches up much closer to the way a TV season is structured: 40 minutes chunks, 12, 13 episodes. In those shows it's much more about the characters it's about following their journey than the plot

machinations."

Despite the ruthless nature of your character – for now known as John Doe until a permanent moniker is thought of – you won't be the guy who goes to Dallas and shoots Kennedy, say. You're more likely to go to Afghanistan or Iraq, hot conflict zones, and eliminate people in that context. "You're going to create a corridor of death a mile wide to [get to] your target," promises Black.

The firefights are going to be up close – "None of this sniping guys, pixel-on-the-horizon nonsense" says Black – and, hopefully, satisfying a certain blood lust. The game won't be open world, though it won't be a funnelled experience like *Modern Warfare*. The tactics of your enemies are going to have an 'arcade focus' without them being mindless drones spewing towards you. They will work together to defend their turf, but their actions will be readable and understandable. "If guys are gonna flank me, I'd better be able to see them f--king flanking me and not just suddenly get shot in the ass – they may

“You're going to create a corridor of death a mile wide to [get to] your target”

STUART BLACK

(top to bottom) Stuart Black, Tom Gillo, Andrew Wilson and Max Cant



ARMY OF BOOM

A day's killing just too much for one man? There'll also be transparent drop-in, drop-out online co-op and team deathmatch to spread the workload. Co-op sounds like it's going to be custom made, as the single player game will be about you as a single entity. It seems like the days of just having two clones of what would normally be a single player are coming to a close, or at least forcing developers to think more carefully about the justification behind their co-op campaigns. "When we look at co-op and team deathmatch," says Black, "it's going to be from a larger perspective of the network and the target and [will] fill in the backstory details of the situation they're creating on the world at large." Sadly, there's not going to be a splitscreen option. "We talked about it for a while then we realised that it wasn't going to be [a] realistic [achievement] as the quality would drop so much."

Bodycount = one, and counting



WE HAVE INTELLIGENCE

Reinforcing the 'arcade' element is the collection of intel as currency. The more 'Intel Points' you have will give the ability to access new targets, new abilities and areas of the world. Intel's collected by exploring the world, killing bad guys you'll find it in the environment, and by chaining up kills. "Kinda like how you chain up moves in a beat 'em up," explains Black. "For example I may have a commander type character and he's going to drop 50 Intel points if I kill him, but I kill a scavenger and three assault guys before him, he may pop 500 intel. Different combinations of guys, or four headshots in a row will give out different points".

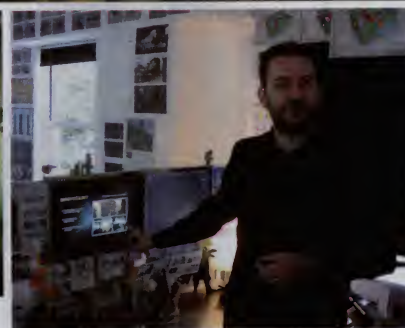


Not pictured: destruction, death, etc.

He's gunning for you



"Cheers, it's been a blast"



STYLE GUIDE

A lot of attention has been paid to the styling and difference between *The Target* and *The Network*. The *Target*'s architectural design is mostly angles, clean and crisp. Everything's superbly simplistic: 45-degree angles with a cold angular style and colour palette. The *Network*, though, is much more rounded: happy, sunshine, softening of colours. "We're looking outside the games industry for influence," says Cant. "The big thing for me is not to reference other games. It's in-breeding, it's no good. So, we're looking at media, pop stuff, and contemporary graphic design. We don't want another 'gritty' shooter: we want this to be a really beautiful, glittery experience."

as well be spawning behind me otherwise," exclaims Black. "You're going to go on a stylised orgy of shooting and shredding". He demonstrated the 'shredding' by jumping into the gameworld and tearing up the world.

He's somewhere in Africa, on the coast in an "oil-polluted, exploited, governmentless country". What we're seeing is best considered to be a tech demo at this stage. While the framerate is solid and physics robust – powered by Codemasters' ever evolving and expanding EGO engine – none of the final lighting elements are in place.

Nor are any opposing forces around – for now – but a stack of crates is sprayed with bullets. Each comes apart violently but believably as bits of the panel fly off. Then the ammo stack inside ignites, spilling what's left of the crate's carcass open like a metal and wooden flower. The boxes beside it, on top of it, are also twisted out of shape, blown sideways across the forecourt. "We're confident that's the most complex prop ever made," says Cant, calmly. "A normal [crate] like that is probably 120 polygons. Ours tops out at over 5000."

A pillar is showered with automatic fire, the structure raining down a dust storm of concrete. Then we turn to the side of a huge building and it is laced with bullets. The relentless gunfire picks a hole in the wall as the brickwork falls apart. It makes *Bad Company* look pedestrian as the hole is gradually made wide enough for Black to step through. "My path of destruction is unique," says Black over the din of gunfire. "Even this

demo level we're seeing hasn't been emptied by anyone on the dev team."

However, there are concessions. Metal is sacred. It's their way of saying you're not going through, and that means that you won't be able to bring down an entire building, though this will keep the battle tight and intimate. "When you're hunkered down behind glass or a brick wall that's shredding in front of you it's more visceral, engaging, and the pressure's there," says Wilson.

"There have been other titles that done the destruction thing, that have kicked down the side of the building and you've thought, 'Cool, that's pretty f--cking impressive'," says Black. "But it's kinda one note. I talk about this stuff in terms of a fireworks display. If I go to a fireworks display and it's the one firework going up for 20 minutes we'd all be pretty disappointed, it's gotta have an ebb and flow. It's not just one trick over and over, and there are a few titles out there that have fallen into trap."

"The greys of war thing, that's dead," says Cant. The African level we saw is going to be colourful, full of greens and yellows. They're not going for dusty, steering away from the stereotypical representations of the environments.


"Environmental narrative is something I really want to push," continues Cant, referring to a bus that was wedged half-way through a gate in the demo. "The use of static props has to tell a story. So many games do that sandbox thing where they dump a load of barrels into the environment and it doesn't mean anything. You should be able to read

what's gone on in the environment before you get there." So that half destroyed bus is more than a pretty accessory. It could be that the feeling citizens used it to ram raid the complex.

"Everything has to have an interesting silhouette so it can be read at distance," says Cant. "You need to know who you're shooting, where they're going, what character state they are, more importantly what object they're hiding behind so you can shoot through it and kill them."

As for weapons and equipment (see *Gunning For It*), they're "going to look very new, very cutting edge. Sort of stuff people would do with unlimited resources. Imagine if Apple or Bang & Olufsen did stealth technology. What would that look like? You'd just want to play with it."

"We're going to augment the weapons, but not to the level of say *District 9*. There's no lasers, no holograms," continues Cant. "We ask ourselves, 'What's the coolest stuff that humans have already done?' and a lot of it is more interesting than science fiction. We're referencing things like vertical lift technology, like F22 and Sukhoi, even that was 30 or 40 years old. There's nothing that we're putting in to the weaponry that doesn't already exist to make them happen."

"The single most important thing for us is that it's about having fun with a gun," Black concludes. "We want to make it as soft and friendly as we can. Well, as friendly as you can when you're unloading a gun in to someone's face." 

THE ART OF VIOLENCE

WORDS: PAUL TAYLOR

User-generated content, man-eating lions, and bowling balls. How these three things work together to make you want to play as a psychopath

It's no secret that we had mixed reviews in the first game," admits Karsten Lund, game director at IO Interactive in Copenhagen. It's close to minus four degrees outside, and though it hasn't snowed in more than 24 hours the white stuff is piled up on the sides of the roads, against buildings and in our shoes. The river behind the studio has big slabs of ice that are clinging to the shoreline, and the sun hides behind the clouds. There doesn't seem to be much to do in these sub-zero temperatures apart from work on games and stamp your feet until you reach the next warm building. Lund's referring to the first *Kane & Lynch*, and while he assures us that it "did very well" at the cash register, you'd be forgiven for not having it sitting next to *Uncharted* and *Assassin's Creed* on your shelf. The sequel, however, has more than enough potential to bring the deadly duo out of gaming's 'also ran' box.

Kane & Lynch: Dead Men had much going for it. It was a game that lived on the story, the interaction between the characters and its set-pieces, but died on the actual gameplay elements. As a third-person experience it was somewhere between a crime caper and a tactical military shooter with a busted cover system. *Dog Days* is more than a makeover: its roots to the past are acknowledged

and celebrated, which is why this game is distinctly known as *Kane & Lynch 2* rather than just *Kane & Lynch: Dog Days*.

Set in Shanghai, this time around we're following Lynch, the psychopath with a horrendous mullet and a foul mouth. He's a man without military training who's often irrational and improvises to gain success. Lund sets up the scenario. "Lynch is working as a henchman for a British guy called Mr. Glazer, a crime boss who couldn't hack it in Europe so he heads to Shanghai where [he and his men are] all heroes: white, tall and intimidating. They have a successful life, and do lots of heists, but land themselves an arms deal where they have to shift guns from China to Africa. They're way in above their heads so Lynch calls in Kane, the ex-mercenary, for military assistance. He shouldn't have, because it's going to end up going very, very wrong."

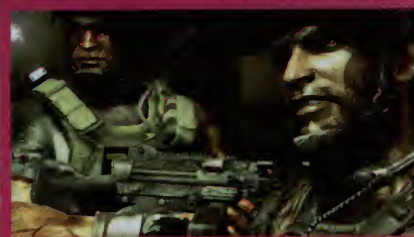
Lund and his team want to "make something that's more real, more gritty and more intense" than the next action game. "The keyword here is 'real'," continues Lund. So they turned to YouTube, the bastion of homemade clips. "We live in a user-generated era and show each other stuff that's real, and we want to go and see stuff that's real, so YouTube and reality TV is trying to show us

stuff that happened in real life."

Lund told us they'd seen a clip of a guy being eaten by a lion. "It doesn't look staged in the sunset; it looks rough and handheld and you don't see anything, but you instantly get the feeling of 'this is for real'. This reality wave is slowly coming to Hollywood with *Cloverfield* and *Paranormal Activity*, just not into games, so this will be a very interesting twist."

He then showed us a couple of clips not of animals eating people, but of a street fight. "The way the image is compressed [into a low bitrate], the way the colours are bleeding, the way the lights are working, the way the camera is [positioned]. Everything goes in to this to create this feeling of it happening on the street. The cameraman doesn't know what's going on. What's interesting is when the action really picks up it gets behind some kind of sign because the cameraman didn't know what was going to happen."

Then they applied this aesthetic to the gameworld. As we see in a later level, Lynch is eating a bowl of noodles in a restaurant until a shotgun firefight erupts around him. He looks like Solid Snake gone to seed; grimy, craggy face, a curtain of hair skirting his scalp and glasses permanently wedged over his crinkled nose. There's a lot



TWO FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST

You might have noticed the similarities as well. Two blokes on the run in Shanghai who could be classified as anti-heroes – it sounds a bit like EA's jock-ular *Army of Two: The 40th Day*. Are IO worried about any comparisons?

"I just recently played the demo," explains Lund. "I played the first one, and I didn't worry because it's a very different kind of game. If you just think of *'Army of Two in Shanghai'* I don't think we're that close; we shouldn't be afraid. It was truly coincidental – we didn't even know anything about it. This is not about Shanghai. It's about two guys and it's about being in trouble and Shanghai's just another place to be. Our Shanghai is more like a characterisation of the fact that these guys are in a world they don't belong to or don't know anything about. It could have been anywhere. It's not like we have something to say with Shanghai in particular. It's a very alien yet recognisable world where stuff is in high contrast. Old and new, rich and poor, torn down and built at the same time. I think the game shows that and if you want to build something in the one location Shanghai is a good place and you go through so many environments in the levels."

AT THE MOVIES, PART ONE

The game's inspiration is primarily drawn from 'real' content, like YouTube and reality TV. Lund also told us of a group of Danish directors who created the 'dogme' movies, which are "a set of rules to make movies by, where you can only use available lighting and you only use one camera position, and a visual style that gave it a little more of a real edge. I'm not saying we're directly inspired by it, but I really wanted [*Kane & Lynch*] to tap into that feeling you have when you watch video footage that's just been made, because it was interesting to look in that direction."

happening on-screen, and not just the plaster exploding off the walls, or the fridge toppling over as the cops close in. The camera is brought in tight on his shoulder, making it feel more like a first-person shooter than third-person while he ducks for cover. Breaking free, Lynch sprints away through an open area after dispensing the other bad guys and the camera wobbles as though some invisible cameraman is furiously trying to keep up whilst documenting the action.

"We didn't really write in a cameraman in this story as a gameplay mechanic," says Lund. "It just proves to us that it's working, that people actually sense the camera's present [and is an] extra actor. The camera is also a co-star of this game, which is a good thing: you should picture yourself there, running after that guy (Lynch)."

It also shows up some of the other effects used. Fluro tubes cast a weird purple streak, as though the lens of the camera is from a \$100 cheapie and the CCD is freaking out. It's also grainy and rough, but still appealing. The build we saw never dipped below 60 frames-per-second, a standard that rightfully shouldn't be just the aspiration of racing games.

This visual 'noise' – think a high ISO on your old compact camera – mashes in with

Pictured: crazy white guys with guns



Haircut. Get one



NOW WITH NO ADDED NORTH

Since *Kane & Lynch 2* is a game hoping to capture 'the real', will we see Nolan North in here since he's really everywhere? (see p96 for an example). "What? No no no. No," laughs Lund. "We actually try to cast actors who don't sound like your everyday videogame character, just to make sure we have that different vibe. I like Nolan, I think he's good, but I don't think he'd fit this kind of game."

“IO decided to make the game take place over two days and two nights”

the chaos of Shanghai. It's a world also explored by another duo of guns for hire (See 'Two flew over the Cuckoo's Nest') that's filled with detritus, a mish-mash of tradition and modern elements as well as junk. It's an intentional visual overload as you catch sight of plastic-wrapped furniture, household appliances, people riding bikes on the street; all illuminated by the bright neon that washes over the landscape.

IO decided to make the game take place over two days and two nights. We're not sure at this stage if you have to be at a certain place at a certain time throughout the whole of the game, but since it appears to be a linear experience we can only assume his and Kane's adventure will be guided.

Lynch's rampage continues. As he bursts



Not pictured: crazy white guys with guns

out from the restaurant and onto a ledge, the surface below him is a rooftop made up of a patchwork of concrete and corrugated plastic. He and Kane still have a voracious and ferocious verbal back and forth, each sounding stressed about the situation they're in. The voice acting enhances the atmosphere, though we felt they needed to sound a bit more breathless after sprinting and less 'clean' to match the visual grit. Still, the dialogue is stacked with four-letter words we can't reprint here that are more than just explicit for the sake of sounding tough.

This shift to Lynch has established many changes, and not just visual, to fit the style of the man. "[Dead Men] was two games in one. It was a military tactical shooter, squad based, and there was a crime caper, and I think we knew we were at that crossroads, and we needed to figure out precisely what game we were making. We chose the crime shooter, and then we got rid of the military tactical elements to fit Lynch. There's no more squad commands or rappelling down buildings. You need to read the scene and figure out what to do. It's very intense. Everything's much closer; even Lynch is closer to the camera and the enemies are close to Lynch. It creates a claustrophobic feeling of being on the run."

Ducking down and behind a pillar, a prompt flashes up on the bottom of the screen indicating that Lynch could make a dash for the next solid object. Lund explains the revamped cover system, which is now button-activated so you don't stick to objects in a weird way. When you are in cover you have options to vault over, rush out or switch to another position no matter whether it's low or high. "If you take nonsolid cover you need to be mindful that it is going to break, and if it breaks it'll throw you to the ground, you'll be 'down and dead', and you have to find new cover [and] get back up."

That 'down and dead' is a new element that sounds similar to *Borderlands'* method of rejuvenation. "It's a second chance. The game needs to be dangerous... but that can be very frustrating if it's too dangerous. So, if you get a very high impact you will be thrown to the ground, and you have to crawl around and find cover, or hit back from the ground. If you are near cover you get the bonus of going back into cover very fast, but when you're out in the open it's going to take a while to get back up." It sounds like staying behind the rebar is the safest place to be. Of course, you can hide all day but you're not going to get very far if you can't aim and shoot back.

"We've worked on the connection



CITIZEN'S ARREST

If you take a look at IO Interactive's portfolio, you'll notice a worrying trend. Thugs, mercenaries, and vigilantes pepper its games. What is it about anti-heroes that make them so attractive to warrant basing your career on them?

"There's a romantic idea in being outside the law in a way," laughs Lund. "There are so many 'good' guys out there you need to set yourself apart somehow. It's not about being good or evil, it's about having a different set of values and problems you need to solve. Everyone can be pushed over the edge at some point and these guys are a little bit over the edge, you can say. But I think you realise that inside of them are a set of values, and a want and need that we can all recognise. I wouldn't say they're inspired by any one person in particular. It's a hive mind of the team that put bits and pieces from different places together, and from ourselves, and we slowly moulded these guys in to shape. There's a lot of legacy from the first game that we wanted to draw upon and maybe show a few different sides."



LET'S SPLIT

The viral campaign has begun, and one of the videos might be right down your alley as Lynch strikes a door and then something not made from wood with his bowling ball. Can we expect to pick one up in-game? We pinned Lund down and demanded he didn't spare us any details.

"It is a shooter, that's the genre we're in. The story will present a lot of gameplay objectives that you will have to achieve in order to get through it, and that gets you playing the game in a few different ways. If you look closely in the levels you might find a bowling ball somewhere."

If you haven't seen the video, log on to the internet and go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzMFMGpEpf8>

“The shift to Lynch has established many changes, and not just visual”


Gritty? Yes






AT THE MOVIES, PART TWO

We've heard rumblings for a while about a *Kane & Lynch* movie, but so far the trailers at Hoyts have been dry of the psycho and merc. What's the story? "It's a Hollywood project," said Lund wryly. "Which means we don't know anything and nobody knows anything about it until someone signs something on a bit of paper. That's the way it works, right? It's all talk until someone signs. I believe in it, but it's not tied up to the game. The game is a self-contained unit."

 BLAM



"Hurry, I hate missing the previews!" 



FRAGILE ALLIANCE

The multiplayer mode from *Dead Men* returns, which is so big it needs its own event according to Lund. This heist mode sees you and seven cohorts pull off a heist, steal the money and get out in one piece. The problem is you can't trust anyone. Work together and you share the loot, but traitors don't share with anyone. Turn on your gang and you can walk away king, but everyone will be coming after you.

Co-op returns, with your partner taking control of Kane in a splitscreen mode. You'll be able to go online with co-op, too.

between firing and hitting on both ends," Lund tells us confidently. "We've made sure that when you're hit you get a lot of feedback and we've made sure that what the crosshair's on you'll actually hit, so nothing's going to get in the way. We've done a lot of testing to make sure it actually works this time." We see it for ourselves as Lynch aims and shoots at a propane tank between the shelves of a DVD store he's holed up in, causing some serious damage to a bunch of would-be killers who are loitering nearby.

He doesn't stop, as he lands a particularly vicious and accurate shot, and his foe loses his head. We don't quite see it though, as the gore is purposely pixilated. "Style wise we thought it would be something that's fun," grins Lund, "And I think that really supports the idea of this is real. It set off the imagination. The feedback we've had from this game is that it's extremely over the top, but really we're showing much less than other

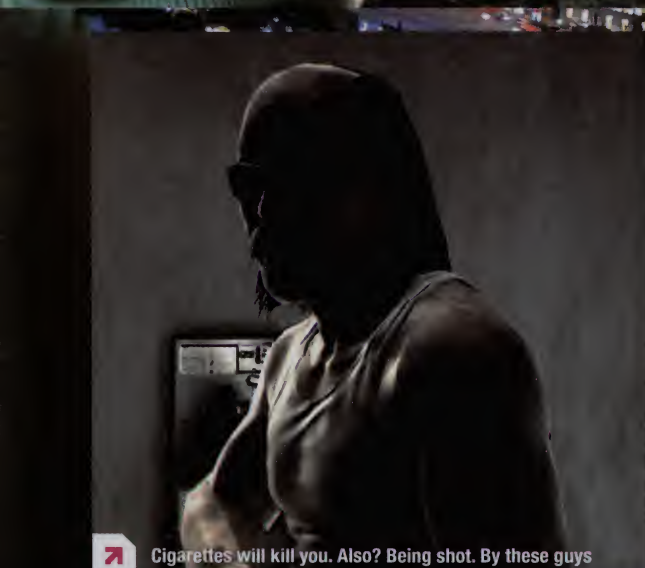
games are showing of blood and gore, but your minds are working. I know we're pushing the limit of what you can do with in terms of violence, but I think it's fine that we're trying to step back a bit in certain areas."

Demo time over, we've come away impressed by the changes made to the duo. Changing the lead character, pace and structure hints at a massive overhaul, but the team who made *Dog Days* was comprised of the original crew behind *Dead Men*. It points to a more refined vision and a willingness to try again until it feels right. Plus, online multiplayer and local co-op (see *Fragile Alliance*) will add to its longevity beyond single player. "It made perfect sense for us to do a sequel because I think it's an interesting franchise, it's one of the best selling new new IPs that came out," explains Lund, smiling at the end of his presentation after silencing the Chinese yells on-screen. "I think the world needs more Kane and Lynch." -B.



“It points to a more refined vision and a **willingness to try again** until it feels right”

The mullet. Business at the front, party at the back



Cigarettes will kill you. Also? Being shot. By these guys



(Top to bottom) Kane and Lynch settle things the easy way. This life-size statue of them greeted us as we walked through the front doors of IO Interactive, while outside the offices a row of bicycles show that the Danes like to get to work the hard way. Although we wanted to, we resisted from sliding all the way down the bannister. The lift's much quicker.



"I wear my sunglasses at night!"

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“Despite being such a cold, ruthless, vengeful prick **its really hard not to like Kratos**”

60 God of War III

Let slip the gods of war!

REVIEW RATINGS

PlayStation
**GOLD
AWARD**

10 Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be perfect. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an amazing fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible praise.

PlayStation
**SILVER
AWARD**

9 Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the very best in its genre, a 9 comes with high praise.

PlayStation
**BRONZE
AWARD**

8 Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments, despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a bunch of moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but few will want to play a game that half sucks.

4 Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

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- 77** Puzzle Chronicles

WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING THIS MONTH



- 45%** Grinding though JRPGs
- 25%** Blowing holes in walls
- 20%** Being shouted at by children
- 10%** Having sex with Aphrodite

2 Terrible: Virtually nothing good here at all, and definitely not worth the effort of removing the wrapper.

1 The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality.



We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible.



“Watching multiple titans **fight off the god squad** and gargantuan seahorse crabs is thrilling”



WORSE THAN

GOD OF WAR IV?

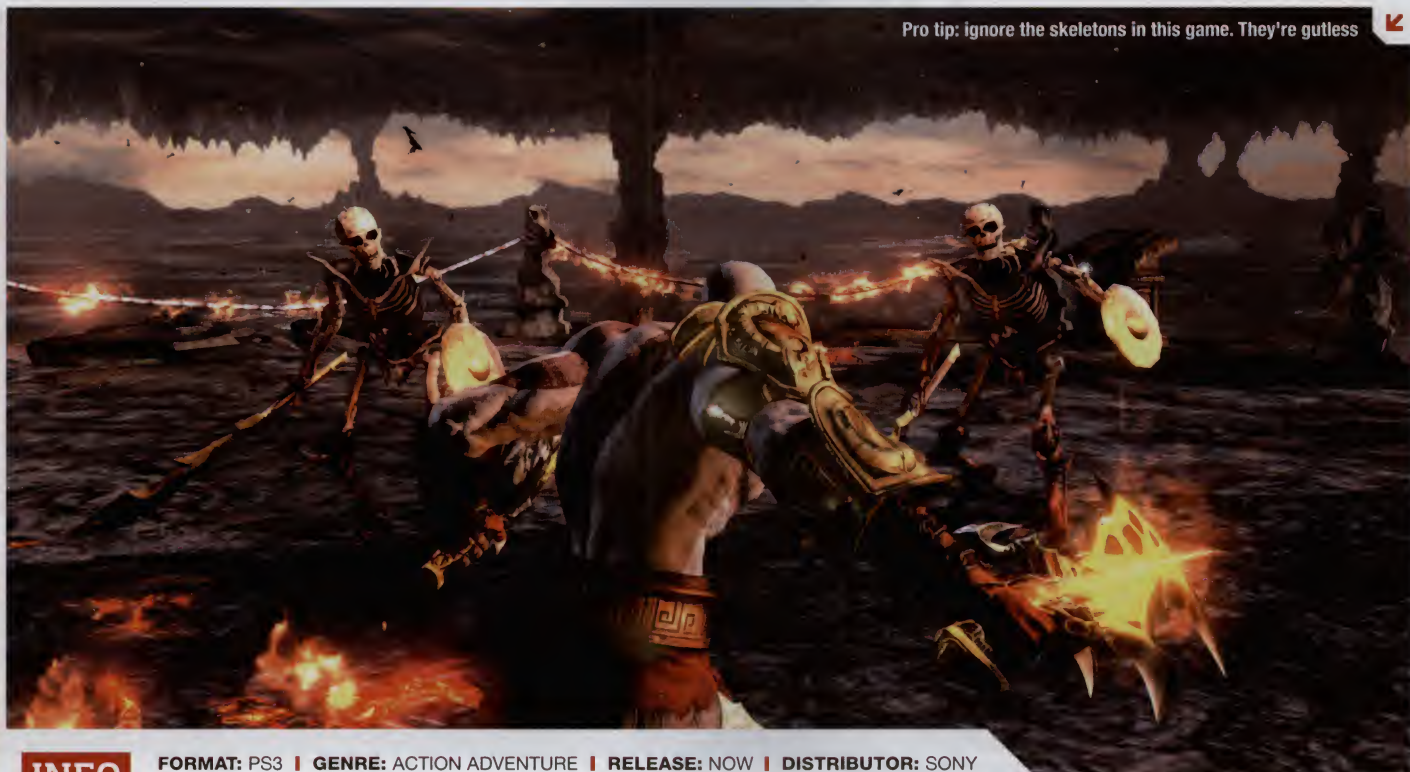


BETTER THAN

EVERYTHING BEFORE



Pro tip: ignore the skeletons in this game. They're gutless



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: ACTION ADVENTURE | RELEASE: NOW | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
 DEVELOPER: SONY SANTA MONICA | PLAYERS: 1 | RRP: \$119.95

GOD OF WAR III

Let the goregasm begin

Male pattern baldness is an unstoppable force that can really ruin everything. Just ask the shit-scared gods of Olympus, they'll set you straight. Zeus effectively signed his own death warrant the day he decided to craft Kratos as a cue ball. That other business with tricking the Spartan into killing his family, sending him to Hell a few times and stabbing him in the guts? They were just minor, secondary abuses compared to Kratos' secret rage at being a chrome dome. And man, oh man, do those gods pay for their follicle foul-up.

Kratos is a man machine of pure malevolence in this adventure. This third – possibly final – episode picks up from the cliff-hanger ending of the last game (which, literally, had you hanging off a humanoid cliff that was hanging off a regular cliff). Kratos is riding the earth titan Gaia as she scales Mount Olympus in an effort to defeat Zeus; who stands smugly on his mountaintop, flanked by the six Olympian Gods who are also on your 'deities to decapitate' list. Poseidon, Hades, Helios, Hermes, Hercules, and Zeus sure picked the wrong day to let their immortal life insurance lapse.

The opening scene where you do battle upon the back of Gaia represents your first involuntary spasm in the ocular overdose that is *God of War III*. Honestly, you've never seen an action set-piece done this classily and on this sort of scale in a PlayStation game before. Traversing across the back of Gaia features dizzying, vertigo-inducing camera shifts that border on the breathtaking. The greatly

improved graphics engine can also seamlessly zoom in for intimate kill move just as easily as it may pull right back to show Kratos as a tiny speck – impossible to spot if it wasn't for the telltale trails of his weapons.

When you stumble upon your first 'family-sized' enemy – a seahorse crab (who hates massive damage directed its weakpoint) – you just know that this whole ride is going to be something special. In comparative terms; watching multiple titans fight off the god squad and gargantuan seahorse crabs is thrilling. It really does feel like D-Day combined with the movie *Cloverfield* with Kratos lopping off limbs smack-bang in the middle of it all. *God of War III* is filled with moments of such awesomeness and it made us gape in wonderment like slack-jawed yokels. Not many games have the power to do that.

The visuals in *God of War III* also manage to amaze in a smaller, more intimate scale. The attention to detail evident in the environments and characters is phenomenal; the increased polygon count is further complimented by a dramatic increase in how many enemies appear on screen, and a dynamic camera system that always keeps the violence cinematic. Certain key encounters actually take place in the first-person perspective – and not exclusively through Kratos' eyes. Ever wanted to know what it would look like to get your face stomped on by the former God of War himself? You'll get your chance, puny mortal.

So, *God of War III* handles the finer details well, and the bigger picture too; but has the core gameplay seen similar evolution? Yes and

no. From the very onset the game feels familiar; your old combos (while looking flashier) return relatively unchanged and you can feel the adventure going through the same tried-and-true rhythms (massacring smaller enemies gives way to platforming, this becomes a puzzle which then leads to an epic boss fight). There's certainly nothing wrong with reworking and reusing such a classic formula though. If anything *God of War III* manages to show all other pretenders to the throne how its done and never once feels like a stale experience. At worst this just feels like sliding on a well-worn sandal again.

There have been minor improvements along the line, of course. Button commands for Quick Time Events now occur in the four compass points of your screen which serves two practical purposes: it makes selecting the correct button a bit easier, and it keeps the action on-screen as uncluttered as possible – so that you can focus on watching Kratos conduct eye surgery on a demon with its own horn. Secondly, Kratos' arsenal has been given a bit of an overhaul this time around. Via the D-pad you can gain access to three chainblade weapons and some bad-arse knuckledusters called the Nemean Cestus. The chain weapons have their own individual combo sets, while the Cestus sacrifices range and twirliness for the attractive ability of punching people's faces off.

Regardless of which weapon you're holding you can always access the expanded grappling system. Sure, you can still snap necks as per usual, but now you may hold down the **Ⓢ** button to sprint about and use a smaller enemy



EXTRA BITS OF COOLNESS

- Unlike the first two iterations in the series where there were only 15 enemies on screen, there is up to 50 this time around.
- Enemies can also jump on Kratos, eventually weighing him down and smothering him. This can be broken by wiggling the analogue stick.
- You can ride monsters like the Cyclops and "control" them (via vicious chops to the back of the head).
- The scale of the game is so large that the entire Medusa level from the first *God of War* game can easily fit in the palm of the Titans hands.
- A new 'zipper system' realistically depicts the slicing of animated skin.

➤ Poseidon has crabs. Pass it on



➤ Father of the year strikes again

as a battering ram. This technique lets you plough through mobs of enemies and is also great for preventing said group of foes from clambering on top of you in a dogpile.

All weapons come interlinked with their own distinct magical attack on the **△** button. These brutal elemental assaults increase in ferocity when you level up your equipment with souls that are discovered in vases, earned from killing enemies, or freely awarded for feats of epic sexual prowess. Personally, our favourite magic attacks include the ability to summon a phantom phalanx of Spartan shields (complete with a hail of arrows that blots out the sun). Also, the ability to summon undead versions of your worst enemies to fight at your side certainly has its benefits.

In addition to magic, Kratos earns access to a host of other items that offer new gameplay twists. Apollo's Bow returns to be

used cleverly in puzzles, there's the opportunity to use a solar-powered decapitated head to find secrets, and winged boots will have you bolting up walls like a psychotic parkour practitioner. Speaking of feathered accessories, the Icarus wings you acquired in the last game are used to great effect in slick interactive flight sections that break up the action nicely.

Playing as Kratos himself is still quite an intoxicating experience. Despite being such a cold, ruthless, vengeful prick it's really hard not to like the guy. When he isn't eviscerating his sworn enemies he is doing very much the same to anybody else who either tries to help him, or is unfortunate enough to be breathing in his vicinity. There are some delicious black comedy moments when hapless non-combatants are purposefully put in your way. These unfortunates usually get off with a half-arsed stab in the pancreas and a quick death – Kratos' real enemies are nowhere near as lucky.

As is typical with the franchise, *God of War III* is gorier than one of Charles Manson's daydreams. At first we thought it was just the higher-definition visuals talking, but we soon came to realise that this third outing is the bloodiest by a large margin. Kratos is oftentimes bathed in blood as he tears out eyeballs, spills intestines and uses very large, very unsanitary objects for DIY tonsillectomies. Sony Santa Monica is still the maestro of manglement and we were unable to put the game down, simply because we wanted to see what outrageous death awaited our next victim. If that's wrong, we don't want to be right.

In terms of longevity, *God of War III* can be knocked over in about nine hours on a respectable difficulty. After that you can play again on the hardest difficulty, check out some unlocked 'making of' content, or bedeck Kratos with a bunch of costumes. The bulk of the replayability comes from a combat arena (which does exactly what it says on the tin) and the obligatory challenge mode. Nefarious tests of skill reside within the latter, and you'll really need to think outside Pandora's box in order to



➤ "He chose... poorly"



"Hmmm, this may be the root of all my problems"

“God of War III features more stylish, over-the-top spectacles than a metrosexual optometrist”

complete the challenges arrayed against you. Some personal favourites include smashing inanimate objects within a time limit, keeping an arena's population down to a 50 opponent maximum, and defeating some mid-sized creatures with nothing but your wits and the new shoulder barge technique.

God of War III accomplishes everything a sequel should. Its gameplay remains true enough to the original material to appease the fans, but it also incorporates meaningful tweaks of its own and innovates in other areas. In this case that evolution has been delivered visually; thanks to truly harnessing the PS3 there are mammoth playgrounds, amazing levels of detail on the characters, and a versatile cinematic camera system that shows off all of the above to mind-blowing effect.

This game is an epic rollercoaster ride that you should not miss. A single playthrough of *God of War III* features more stylish, over-the-top spectacles than a metrosexual optometrist. Everything we loved about the original titles has been thoroughly reexamined and improved upon; the combat is richer, the visuals are some of the best on the system – hell, even the sex mini-game has received an incremental increase (*God of War II* had two lovely ladies to get interactive with, this has three). That, friends, is *next-gen*.

This wasn't awarded a 10 because the game is perfection printed onto a disc, nor because the core gameplay has witnessed a massive evolutionary leap. In our opinion *God of War III* has only witnessed a decent amount of improvement in that department. This game earns our highest accolade because it is a thoroughly entertaining ride from go to death throe. It finds a perfect balance between taxing

platforming, cerebral puzzles, and glorious set-piece battles that loosen the bowel when you realise they're in-game graphics. Top that off with masterful camera work – that makes us totally rethink our hatred of fixed-camera action games – and you have a sequel that easily eclipses anything out there and reclaims it's rightful place at the pinnacle of its genre. Believe the hyperbole. *God of War III* deserves an honoured place – both in your own personal collection and the mighty PlayStation Parthenon. **A Adam Mathew**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

A visual powerhouse that sets a new benchmark for fixed-camera action games.

SOUND

A rich aural landscape of Greek chants, guttural roars and the glorious sounds of battle.

CONTROLS

Instantly familiar, juggling secondary weapons takes some time to learn however.

REPLAY VALUE

Chock a block with bonus content for the fans and additional challenges for the hardcore.

VERDICT: A showcase. Old-fashioned, arse-kicking, astonishing visuals. Must buy!

10



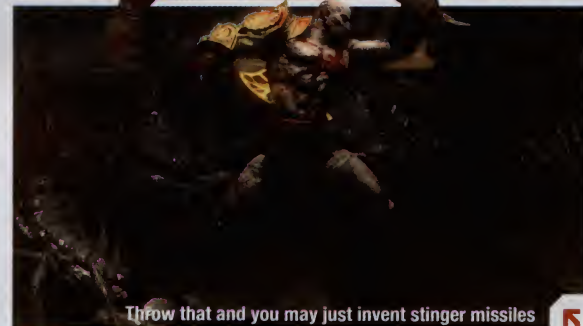
You'd lash out at the world too if you were a zombie in a skirt




Seahorse crab: attack its weakpoint



Never cross the chainblade streams



Throw that and you may just invent stinger missiles



"Yeah, we think we can dance"

PlayStation
Official Magazine - Australia
**BRONZE
AWARD**

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** RPG | **RELEASE:** MARCH 9 2010 | **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX | **PLAYERS:** 1 | **RRP:** \$99.95

FINAL FANTASY XIII

You know our friend Thunder? How about a little Lightning?

In nature it's called survival of the fittest, where only the strongest survive and natural selection dictates that you evolve or go the way of the dinosaur. For the last several decades the *Final Fantasy* franchise has been one of the trendsetters of the genre, taking bold steps forward, offering an unprecedented number of hours to each adventure, as well as giving gamers a unique, extremely Japanese and, dare it be said, emotional experience.

Many a *FF* fanboy (or fangirl) will shed a tear at the mere mention of *FFVII* and the recollection of the surprise demise of a main character that changed the nature of the game forever. It oot deep. Behind all the fluff and

pomp, and line after line of seemingly endless dialogue, it proved that a videogame could be more than just a fanciful distraction. It could be an interactive journey full of twists and turns and tug at your heartstrings when you least expect it. The franchise has done a huge service to help legitimise our industry, and Square Enix must be thanked and recognised for

that. Yet in doing so, as the action-oriented RPGs usher in a new era, it begs the question has Square Enix become the orchestrator of its own demise? Sure this lumbering dinosaur, this T.rex, has got the legs, but does it pack enough of a punch?

The RPG can be split into two very different categories. The more traditional 'turn-based' beast which has now mutated, known as the JRPG (J for Japanese) and more prevalent in the east, and the action-RPG, which is favoured in the west. The gap between genres is growing wider all the time. With the introduction of shooter-cum-RPGs like *Borderlands*, *BioShock* and the current Xbox hit *Mass Effect* (and their sequels) the old-school RPG was beginning to lose its lustre. In an attempt to sate both audiences Square Enix has sought to maintain the nuts and bolts of its franchise, whilst embracing a more rapid-fire style of gameplay. And it works. Kind of.

The story is the run of the mill aneurism-inducing fare, with the writers bandying about terms like Pulse, Cocoon, Eden, Focus, l'Cie, fal'Cie and Pulse fal'Cie like they were going out of fashion. To save you a tumour, we'll summarise it succinctly for you. There's a revolution erupting between the haves and have-nots, a touch of religious fervour, a dash of conspiracy and some fairly brutal "relocations" for the general populace. Throw in a tragic love story, sibling rivalry, a wacky sidekick and a helium-voiced hottie and you've

pretty much got the gist of it. This is drip fed to you via a combination of in-game cut scenes and (not enough for our liking) some of the most sumptuous CG we've seen in a videogame. These scenes will leave you literally gobsmacked, rubbing your eyes in disbelief. We know it's *Final Fantasy's* trademark, but it still knocks our socks off each and every time we see one.

The first next-gen outing for the series is probably the greatest departure from the tried and tested formula that spawned countless sequels and spin-offs. The open world has been replaced with the most linear of adventures, with the bare minimum of sidetracking. Seasoned RPG veterans will know that venturing away to any side alley, nook or cranny will lead to treasure, and to be frank, they're not that difficult to find at all. All random battles, chit chat with townsfolk and shops have all gone out the window, replaced with scripted battles and larger storylines, and shops and upgrade stations are now available at every save point. Any items collected other than antidote, phoenix down and potions for health remain utilised in name alone, to be merely broken down and used as a form of currency to upgrade your weapons. It could almost be done away with altogether. After struggling with so few save points in previous versions you'll never be short here, with you barely able to take a half dozen steps before encountering a new save, which destroys a lot of the tension. And that's not all

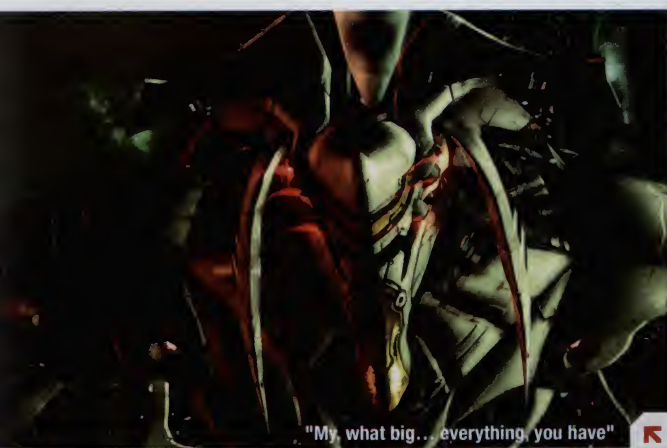
WORSE THAN

FALLOUT 3

**BETTER THAN**

ANY OTHER JRPG... STILL





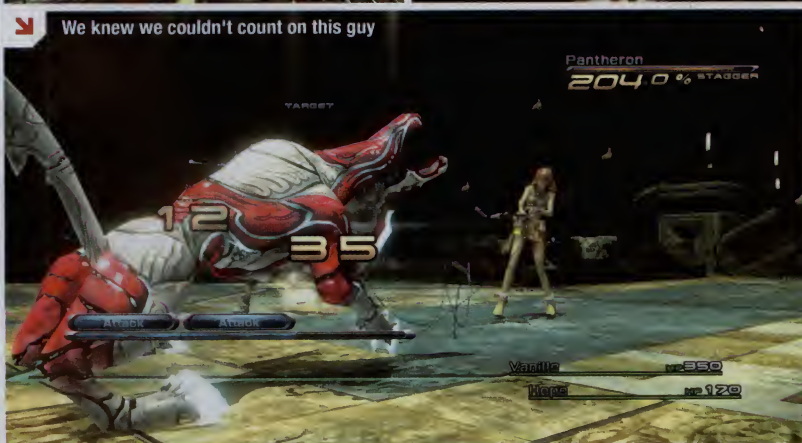
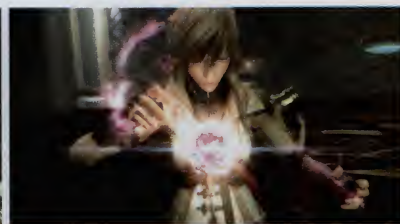
"My, what big... everything, you have"



These people need heroes!



"Hello, is it me you're looking for?"



Nice ha



that's changed, either.

The main character is the soldier Lightning, who'll feel to many as a female version of Cloud, and is perhaps the least effeminate and most brutal lead the series has ever seen. She's joined by Sazh, ex-military badass with a little chocobo chick nestled in his afro, Snow, radular surfer dude/revolutionary with a doo-rag wrapped around his head and a wink and a smile, sexy pigtailed babe Vanille, who's voice can shatter glass and eardrums and booty can turn men's bones to jelly, Hope, the emo whinging little kid overcoming the loss of his mother, and last but not least, Fang (who we swear comes from Mount Druitt, see 'Home Grown'), who makes Xena look soft, and rounds out our bunch.

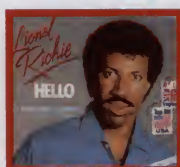
Where this differs from earlier incarnations is the constant switching of your group dynamic, with all characters taking on the role of team leader as you splinter into groups of two. Later on, and for the most part, battles are waged with three characters, but other times you'll be on your own. This is the most radical shift for *Final Fantasy*, and whilst it is challenging and will test those strategists amongst you, we're not really sure it works. The balance is just a little off, and we wonder if it will alienate fans expecting the more traditional three-person

party from the get go, rather than upwards of 15 to 20 hours in.

Remember these words, "Paradigm Shift", because you'll be hearing them every waking moment you battle, in the background, during your loo break, and while you sleep. Seriously, they'll haunt your dreams. As you gallivant about the corridors between each battle you'll be able to slink past enemies and avoid a fight, cast spells to enhance the sneaky-sneakiness or even get a leg up with tactics like "Fortification" to cast haste and protection for an immediate and necessary advantage in larger scale brawls. Each member can use several upgradable character classes. Commando uses heavy physical attacks, Ravager is magic-based and useful to chain assaults together, Medic does exactly what you'd expect, Synergist bolsters the team with protection spells and Saboteur does debilitating damage by poisoning or breaking through enemy barriers. Sentinel is by far the most interesting addition, with no offensive capabilities (other than counterattacks), relying on taunts and heavy defensive capabilities to absorb incoming damage and protect weaker party members.

“It begs the question has Square Enix become the orchestrator of its own demise?”

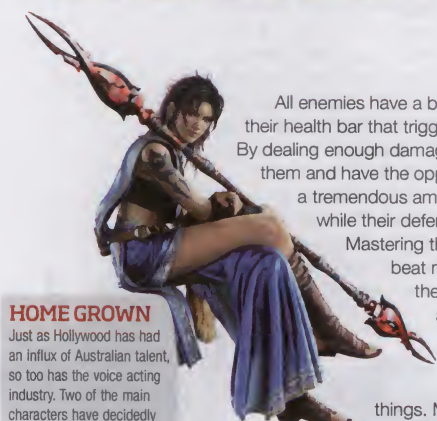
Grouping different characters with different classes together results in a new "Paradigm", which you can generate at the menu. At any point through a battle you can shift between them to maximise your party's effectiveness, with you controlling only the team leader's actions and the CPU handles the rest. It keeps the action fast and relentless as you chip away at adversaries trying to find the best way to clean their clock, whilst keeping an eye on healing the group and protecting the weaker elements. You really will need to be quick on the trigger, and the right combination can have staggering effects.



DANCING ON THE CEILING

This is just too damned wacky for us to let go without comment. It appears that *Final Fantasy XIII* director and character designer Tetsuya Nomura has an "Endless Love" with Motown. When coming up with the concept designs for Lightning's partner in crime, Sazh Katzroy, he based them on 1980s crooner Lionel Richie. No joke. We were only privy to this choice bit of info after our time with the game, but it seems so obvious now we're amazed we didn't see it sooner. Maybe he can return to the spotlight composing the soundtrack to *FFIV*. Here's hoping.





HOME GROWN

Just as Hollywood has had an influx of Australian talent, so too has the voice acting industry. Two of the main characters have decidedly differing and obviously Australian accents. Young pigtailed hottie Vanille's extremely high-pitched tone has a strong Aussie finish to it, but the warrior woman, Fang, left us speechless. She'd feel perfectly at home at the Rooty Hill RSL knocking back a few VBs with the fellas in an almost bogan, "Oi, how's youse goin'?" brogue. We dare you not to smirk each time she speaks on screen.

All enemies have a break point on their health bar that triggers "stagger". By dealing enough damage, you'll stun them and have the opportunity to inflict a tremendous amount of pain while their defences are down. Mastering this is essential to beat mini-bosses and the like, as regular attacks won't do diddley squat in the grand scheme of things. More than ever timing is the key, and you'll need to keep an eye on your attack gauge to coincide with teammates to chain together your strikes and maximise damage.

Making a triumphant return are the colossal creatures (Eidolons) available for summoning. As usual, to get these godlike entities to submit to your will you need to defeat them mano-a-mano first. Once knocked out, you can sparingly call upon their services to deal catastrophic damage to larger bosses, with a twist. Rather than using two or three specialised

moves you can choose to have them reinforce your comparatively measly attacks or combine for some wild and woolly new ones. Lightning summons Odin, who transforms into a horse who she rides into victory, Snow calls upon the Shiva Sisters who meld into a motorcycle with gatling gun. The kicker is that you have about a half-a-dozen or so attacks with each, and the Eidolons get crazier the deeper down the game's rabbit hole you go.

There's a hell of a lot to like about *Final Fantasy XIII*, surely enough to satisfy the fanbase. But the more changes they make to get in line with a faster-paced style of gameplay, the further away they drift from what made the franchise unique for so many years. The drudgery at the beginning may annoy the casual gamer with an investment of several hours before Paradigm Shift is available and a half-a-dozen more before the first summons. Fans, however, won't care in the slightest. They'll be well aware lead time before proceedings really kick off. With spellbinding graphics, a darker aspect and finger-on-the-trigger gameplay, if you have 50 or so hours up your sleeve, take a gander at what *Final Fantasy XIII* has to offer; millions of Japanese gamers can't be wrong. **Dave Kozicki**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Some of the most pants-wettingly glorious CG ever seen this side of *Avatar*. Sure to take your breath away.

SOUND

By the hundredth or so battle you'll be ready to strangle the composer, and some characters voices are beyond cringe-worthy.

CONTROLS

Easy peasy to use with most of your time spent hitting **○** or **ⓧ**, though the camera is fiddly.

REPLAY VALUE

Not much, with such an extremely linear story and not much diversity to bring you back for a second round.

VERDICT: There are some great moments here, but many gamers won't have the minerals to take the job on.

8

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PS3



PlayStation
Network

XBOX LIVE

XBOX 360



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PlayStation
Official Magazine - Australia
**BRONZE
AWARD**

7 In war you can get shot, or blown up. But that's nothing compared to having your head cropped off

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: SHOOTER | RELEASE: NOW | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE | PLAYERS: 1-24 | RRP: \$109.95

BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

Who's bad?

You probably don't know much about the campaign in *Bad Company 2*, because up until a few days ago nor did we.

The action begins in a prologue, set 70 years earlier, on a Japanese-occupied island during World War II. A group of US soldiers have been tasked to slink onto the island and extract an defector, but the mission doesn't

go particularly smoothly. The feel of the prologue should feel familiar to anyone who has dabbled in *Battlefield 1943*, although there's a major twist. During the brief but action-packed opener we're introduced to a secret weapon of incredible power – the search for which will drive the rest of the campaign, from the brink of Russia to the jungles of South America to

the snow-smeared mountains of Alaska.

Bad Company 2, it should be said, feels very much like the original. The hook is still the huge level of destruction possible within the environments. Like the original, it takes a while to un-train yourself from relying on the usual shooter tricks. We're aware the *Call of Duty* series makes a fist of trying to accurately emulate real-world ballistics – with bullets passing through walls and such – but in most first-person shooters squatting behind something solid is the first thing you'll do between magazines, or if a barrage of lead has suddenly been loosed at your face. It's the same in *Bad Company 2*, only you can't count on the wall being there a few seconds later. If your enemy can blow it up, they will blow it up.

DICE calls it Destruction 2.0 and, while it's still not at the same frankly remarkable level we've now seen in the likes of *Red Faction: Guerrilla*, it offers players host of options on the battlefield its competitors do not. Pinned down inside a house in *Modern Warfare 2*? Find a door and pray for the best. Trapped in a building in *Bad Company 2*? Blow out the back wall and Robert's your mother's brother.

Need to flank a tenacious clump of armed miscreants in *Modern Warfare 2*? Cross your fingers Infinity Ward designed the level with that in mind and hid an alley somewhere close. Need to outwit some bozos in *Bad Company 2*? Make a path through whatever you want.

DICE has fixed the checkpoint system so you can no longer simply force your way to the end of the game via a one-man battle of attrition – you'll need to do things right and survive, or try again. Squad dynamics are much-improved also; Haggard, Sweetwater and Sarge are far more useful in this outing. You'll still be required to do the lion's share of the work, but your comrades in *Bad Company 2* are a help rather than a hindrance.

Far and away the best element of the original *Bad Company* was the audio. *Bad Company 2* is no different. This is a game you need to turn up loud and wallow in the deafening symphony of battle. The sharp crack of rifle fire, the tinkling of spent casings as they bounce across floorboards, the truly, truly menacing sound cue of *Bad Company 2*'s MacGuffin, the super-weapon (which sounds like God squeezing out a fart) – nothing has

WORSE THAN

BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY



BETTER THAN

BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY





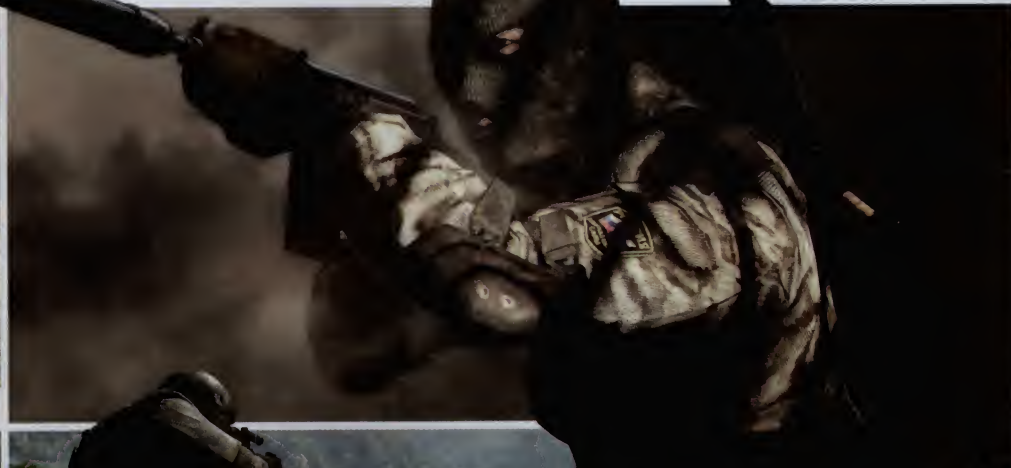
When hide-and-seek turns deadly



Not pictured: Charlie, in the trees



"Tanks for covering me"



Stripy shadows, hidden nutbag



"Dude, this tripod is broken"



Jeep thrills



"Squirrel!"



"Damn and blast!"

“ [It] hasn't completely lost its sense of humour – but it's nowhere near as **light-hearted and charming** as the original ”



YOU MEAN THEM LITTLE CUBES YOU PUT IN HOT WATER TO MAKE SOUP?

The original *Bad Company* ended with the thieving foursome making off with a truck filled with gold bullion, but *Bad Company 2* begins with nary a mention of what happened to the precious gold or why *Bad Company* is back in the thick of it. The explanation? It's a secret.

been missed. The audio component of *Bad Company 2* remains truly glorious – and the effects department at DICE deserve a hearty round of backslapping for nailing it again.

However, we do have some criticisms.

While the Frostbite engine is an impressive bit of kit, it just doesn't lend itself to a game that's as consistently sexy as its main competitors. Close up, when things are quiet, things look slicker than hell. When the action escalates, however, things get a little messy. All this is a symptom of dedicating juice to chaos over killer graphics, which is forgivable.

The thing that truly disappointed us though was the shift in tone. You'll still get a chuckle now and then, and *Bad Company 2* hasn't completely lost its sense of humour – but it's nowhere near as light-hearted and charming as the original. *Bad Company* was refreshing because it was an irreverent, tongue-in-cheek action adventure in the vein of *Three Kings*, or *Kelly's Heroes*. *Bad Company* wasn't about war, it was about a heist. The war was simply a backdrop, and took a backseat to smooth surf tunes and golf carts. It wasn't laugh-out-loud funny, but it was cheeky and clever.

Bad Company 2, to us, seems to have lost some of this spirit, this defining factor. The banter between your squadmates remains, but the overall vibe is more serious. It's just not as likeable as its predecessor.

But even EA seems unconcerned with the single-player. Since E3 the focus has been exclusively on multiplayer. Indeed, our first experience of the single-player wasn't until the game arrived in its review state, in our office.

Will the multiplayer be enough to prise flocks of fans from *Modern Warfare 2*'s steely grasp? Possibly, because it's really quite good. We'll have a more complete overview of the multiplayer component post-release, but our early experience with it is very promising. It's primarily the use of destruction that distinguishes it from *Modern Warfare 2*, because in many other ways it's very similar. The destruction, however, and its dynamic impact on the maps is a massive point of difference.

In almost every way *Bad Company 2* technically outclasses the original, but that's to be expected. We just miss the mischief. But maybe that's just us. **— Luke Reilly**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Up and down visuals, mostly great but sometimes a little messy. We miss the offbeat vibe though.

SOUND

Good voice acting, crisp rattles of machine guns and that super weapon never gets old.

CONTROLS

Standard Issue shooter controls here, but it all feels pleasing and easy to master.

REPLAY VALUE

Single-player runs for longer than *Modern Warfare 2*, but it's the multiplayer that will likely give it long legs.

VERDICT

A top-tier shooter that's more than up to the task of standing side-by-side with *MW2*.

8

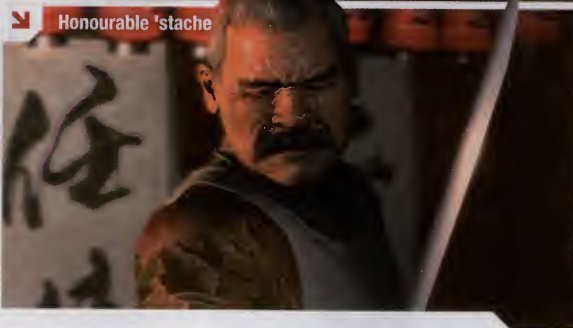
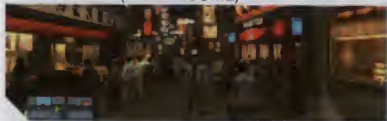
WORSE THAN

YAKUZA 4 (WE PRESUME)



BETTER THAN

YAKUZA 2 (WE PRESUME)

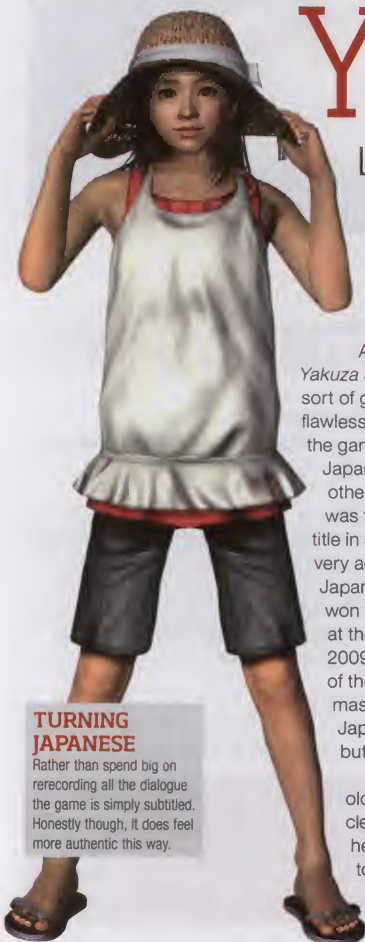


INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** ADVENTURE | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** SEGA
DEVELOPER: AMUSEMENT VISION | **PLAYERS:** 1-2 | **RRP:** \$99.95

YAKUZA 3

Lost in translation?



TURNING JAPANESE

Rather than spend big on rerecording all the dialogue the game is simply subtitled. Honestly though, it does feel more authentic this way.

Reverted in Japan, these tales from the Japanese underworld don't make much of a ripple in the West.

A basic brawler/RPG hybrid, *Yakuza 3* is a detailed and unique sort of game – but it's far from flawless. Early adopters (remember, the game has been available from Japan for over a year) will argue otherwise. After all, *Yakuza 3* was the second-best selling PS3 title in Japan in 2009, snared a very admirable 38/40 in esteemed Japanese games mag Famitsu and won the "Award for Excellence" at the Japan Game Awards 2009. However, the enthusiasm of the initial import reviews masks a number of issues that Japanophiles will readily forgive, but regular punters may not.

Yakuza 3 is a peculiarly old-fashioned game. While it's clearly a basic action-RPG at heart, we expected *Yakuza 3* to fang along at a breakneck clip and scissor kick us in the ballbag – like an

Asian crime caper. Unfortunately, *Yakuza 3* is rarely this urgent, rather it just seems to ebb from one chapter to the next. It's quite a patient experience, and a great deal of your time will be spent wandering around prodding along cutscenes and dialogue exchanges. With nearly 300 minutes of cutscenes alone and large stretches of time where you nary throw a single punch, *Yakuza 3* is a slow-paced game.

It's also inconsistent. Pre-canned cutscenes suddenly give way to in-engine sections where the characters continue to converse, only silently – via slabs of text you need to click through instead of pre-recorded speech. There doesn't appear to be any real rhyme or reason as to when this will happen – it just seems like a cheap way of extending the cutscenes. All it does it undermine the atmosphere – the game goes from a modern, cinematic action-drama to a static, dusty old RPG in the blink of an eye. Fundamentally, the game hasn't changed much since the original in 2005.

Yakuza 3, then, is a curiosity. If you've ever been to Japan you'll appreciate the endless detail in the urban environments. You'll love how it feels like you're truly standing in Tokyo. You'll love the fact you can pop into a convenience store and buy a bottle of

Suntory. If you like distinctly Japanese games, *Yakuza 3* is a great candidate. If you don't you'll probably be turned off. **Luke Reilly**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Fantastic recreations of Tokyo and Okinawa, but the in-game graphics themselves are a bit workmanlike.

SOUND

The original Japanese voiceovers help the atmosphere greatly, although some of it's a bit wacky.

CONTROLS

Basic stuff. Simple brawling controls, standard navigation. It feels a little long in the tooth.

REPLAY VALUE

So many things to do, from side-quests to pimping hostesses, if you get hooked. Should last.

VERDICT

Certainly an acquired taste. So much to do, but the pace may be too slow for some.

7

WORSE THAN

SKATE 2



BETTER THAN

LEISURE SUIT LARRY: BOX OFFICE BUST



Try that on the board



We'll spare you from the 'lifestyle shots'



Skate or die? We'll take death, thanks



Handplants > faceplants. Houseplants < handplants



Sweet flip trick. We actually wanted to manual

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: SPORTS | RELEASE: NOW | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
 DEVELOPER: ROBOMODO | PLAYERS: 1-2 | RRP: \$179.95

TONY HAWK: RIDE

Get set to be bored with this flawed board

Tony Hawk is a rad guy. Luke and Adam had the privilege and honour of meeting him last year, when he came to Sydney to show us a cool new concept for a sequel that would be his riposte to *Skate*. It sounded bold. Thanks to that chat Tony got us amped up with the next evolution of his franchise and a motion-controlled skateboard peripheral. Our spider-senses flared at a few potential roadblocks for the idea, but Tony was just such a lovely guy, we decided to put our concerns aside. For the moment.

Fast forward a year, and we've just stepped off the board to pen the review for you. Even knowing how nice the Bird Man is, we'd be remiss if we didn't tell you to avoid *Tony Hawk: RIDE* like you would a guard rail groin rupturing.

After a 15-minute overture to awfulness that is the calibration sequence you'll soon be presented with *RIDE*'s tutorial mode. You're taught the basics; push kicking past the sensors on the side of the board gives you speed, stomping on the back of the board makes you ollie, twisting and grabbing the board

in unwieldy ways while your character is airborne initiates tricks.

It starts out decent enough on Casual mode (which essentially uses an on-rails setup to 'Scalextric' you through a level) but as soon as you're given full control of your board movement *RIDE* trips over itself and bails. We had a variety of differently-skilled people test this mode – casual beginners, seasoned skateboarders, a regular snowboarder, the hobo who lives in the *OPS* carpark downstairs – none of us could get this bastard to do what we wanted. It's either no good, or too hard. Either way that's not good enough.

This thing's got issues. We can, however, attest to the quality build design of the board – in as much as it withstood us biting it and drop-punting it into the corner of the room in utter frustration. Other than that, it is a befuddling piece of tech that may only be adequately controlled by ninjas with triple-jointed ankles, or no one at all. It's bewildering then that the game seems geared towards the super-uncoordinated casual market. The career mode is insultingly linear, short-lived and your progress through it is interspersed with cheesy live-action videos of people giving you mad props for kooking your way through.

In addition, when you take into account its sub-par visuals, a physics system from

four years ago, and the ludicrous price of admission; *RIDE* is pure frustration made plastic. **Wyatt Hunts**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

'Wacky' mid-mission videos are pitched to the casuals. The in-game graphics are quite unimpressive.

SOUND

A decent enough soundtrack – but that's to be expected. The repetitive, "You bailed!" voice overs get annoying.

CONTROLS

Unresponsive in casual mode, utterly horrendous in any difficulty above that.

REPLAY VALUE

Technically there is an multiplayer mode. Best of luck finding someone willing to play with you though.

VERDICT

The *Skate* series asked
 Activision a very tough question.
 This is not the answer to it.

4

DODGY CHICKEN OR BAD EGG?

Is the board no good, or is it the game itself? Personally, we like to think that it's the game. So does Activision – *RIDE 2* is on the cards.

Consider this: you're reading about MAG in a mag. That. Just. Happened

PlayStation
SILVER
AWARD

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** SHOOTER | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT | **DEVELOPER:** ZIPPER INTERACTIVE | **PLAYERS:** 1-256 | **RRP:** \$99.95

MAG

It's not FANCY but it gets the job DONE!

The acronym MAG (Massive Action Game) is one of the PS3's least fancy, yet completely apt, game

titles. It doesn't twit about like a prick, randomly adding a colon or some mysterious, vaguely sinister qualifying statement like 'MAG: The Shadow War' or 'MAG: Oo-er Vicar, Me Guns are Blazing!': it's just MAG.

The game is a PS3 exclusive, Massive Multiplayer Online First Person Shooter (MMOFPS) that seeks to top previous multiplayer titles like *Warhawk*. The way MAG accomplishes this is simple: make the field of combat bigger.

Much, much bigger.

The game uses server architecture cleverly, to allow online matches with 256 players.

Just seeing that number sitting there like a morbidly obese baby, it's hard to wrap your head around. So for the sake of perspective remember how crazy and kinetic *Warhawk* or *Killzone 2* multiplayer could get? That was with 32 players.

That's not to say you can just pick up MAG and blithely wander into a battle with 255 other players and start fragging. MAG requires a little more investment than that.

MAG requires some early decisions and, unlike a lot of shooters, the choices you make

are actually more important than cosmetic preferences. We'll get to that shortly, but first some back story: it's the year 2025 and war (wait for it...) has changed.

Due to the high cost of maintaining a viable military force, and the signing of the "Millennium Accord", a brittle world peace has been achieved.

At least, that's how it works on paper. Unofficially, PMCs (Private Military Companies) have stepped up to fill the hole. These PMCs have the advantage of being unaligned to any specific country or ideology. They can, quite literally, work for anyone, anywhere, as long as the price is right.

Naturally the PMCs compete, at first on a fiscal level, but soon on battlefields. This conflict is called the Shadow War and has three main PMCs fighting for global domination.

As a player you have to choose which PMC you want to align yourself with. Seryi Volk Executive Responses/SVER (aka "Sever") - a rough but ready group from China, India, Russia and so on. They're not fancy but they're merciless. Raven industries usually from Middle Eastern countries like Iraq, Iran etc. are the tech geeks. Their gear is slick and state of the art and they fight with a fearsome tenacity. Finally, Valor Company round out the selection. These are more typical soldiers. Hailing from the USA, UK and Mexico there are a lot of grizzled

WORSE THAN

BORDERLANDS



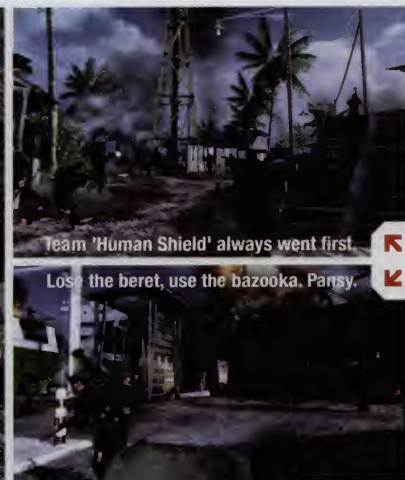
BETTER THAN

WARHAWK





That's right folks, your local Leftorium deals in can openers and assault rifles



Team 'Human Shield' always went first

Lost the beret, use the bazooka. Pansy.



One 255-person teabag, coming right up



No ducks fly south on my watch



veterans, loads of battle experience and fist-bumping from this lot.

Each PMC has their own website where you can take a gander at the recruitment videos and various specs.

Once you've made your choice you pretty much have to stick with it, because the way your character levels up is how you get to fight in the big battles.

There are five game modes, four online. The first, unsurprisingly, is Training. This is a fairly simple mode in which you choose your PMC and level up. What this is really about is cementing your decision regarding the side you fight on.

Suppression is a mode where you hone your fighting skills using 'non-lethal' weapons on your own team-mates in various matches.

Sabotage is a 64-player match between any of the two factions, where you'll either be defending or destroying certain assets.

Acquisition ramps things up for 128 players, where you'll either be stealing or defending prototype vehicles and then there's Domination.

Domination requires you to be level 8 or higher. It's the 256-player battle and lasts 30 minutes.

There are eight command posts which must be taken by the attacking team. If you're attacking, controlling these posts causes damage to the defending side. The defending team, on the other hand, seeks to keep the attackers at bay.

The final mode is Directives, which will randomly shunt you into one of the previous three modes.

Practically, the gameplay is going to be familiar to anyone who's ever played a shooter. You have access to machine guns, sniper rifles, RPGs and, after you've levelled up and used your skill points, mines, poison gas and more powerful ordnance.

Additionally, when you've levelled up

enough to take a command role you can order air strikes, mortar barrages, change your squad's objective and even the spawn point (dropping from the skies after disabling the enemies anti-air is especially enjoyable).

MAG won't wow you with its graphics like MW2, nor does it offer any kind of offline component. Instead MAG delivers online battles that feel epic and the outcomes actually affect your PMC.

You will need to put some serious hours in before you get to unlock the best goodies, and it's the kind of game that requires fairly frequent attention, but the pay off is one of the singularly most compelling and captivating shooters to date. **Anthony O'Connor**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Above average but still a long way from recent shooters like *BioShock 2*. Acceptable but never really stunning.

SOUND

Excellent, except for the number of bloody Americans taking it far too seriously

CONTROLS

Standard and/or customisable template applies. The ability to resuscitate fallen comrades and quickly switch back to your weapon is nice.

REPLAY VALUE

If you dig epic, online matches you're probably going to be playing this, and only this, for a long-arse time.

VERDICT: Shooter junkies take heed, this is where it's at for online combat. Lacking whistles and bells, but solid as.

9



THE GANG'S ALL HERE

Just plopping 256 players on the battlefield might be entertaining, but it's hardly practical. Users are divided into eight-player squads. Four squads form a platoon and four platoons form a company. Sufficiently upgraded players can command squads, directly affecting the outcome. Oh, and you can kill your own team mates.

You should expect lots of swearing and lost XP if you do, though. There are some angry, angry young men out there, readers. Some of them work on this mag.



INFO **FORMAT:** PS3 | **GENRE:** FIGHTING | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** AIE
DEVELOPER: ARC SYSTEM WORKS | **PLAYERS:** 1-2 | **RRP:** \$99.95

BLAZBLUE: CALAMITY TRIGGER

Crazy storyline get!

If you look around this issue, you'll see a metric tonne of games that have their origins in Japan. *BlazBlue*, however, shines through: not only because it is 200 per cent more Japanese than the next title, but also because it's one of the prettiest.

Its roots can be seen in Arc System Works' other over-the-top fighter, *Guilty Gear*. The character types are bold and audacious, and are probably the first thing that will either hook you in or put you off due to their design. Although there are only a dozen characters available, each is radically different to the next in appearance and capabilities. We've mentioned the 'boobie lady', Litchi, in a previous issue, whose spilling cleavage could go tit-for-tat with Bayonetta's for most outrageous in a videogame. There's also a kid who has a life-size marionette, a cat-like humanoid and the expected effeminate-looking anti-

hero with impossible hair.

If the roster dissuades you, you're missing out. The system is easy to get to grips with, and the variety in characters means you have to work your skills and learn to adapt to get the most from each.

Fighting staples are present, like double jumps, dashes and almighty supers. Quarter and half circles reign supreme, and linking these for showy combos requires excellent timing but are the best way to nail an opponent. It uses a four-button scheme, with three attacks for light, medium and heavy, as well as a 'drive' button that is a special attack in itself, and it's not always offensive. If you feel like cheating your shortcuts can be mapped to the shoulder buttons on your pad, but pulling it off and understanding why and how you pulled it off is where you'll gain the most satisfaction.

Where *Street Fighter IV* feels like a measured and calculated game of chess, *BlazBlue* feels more like a game of basketball: it's easy to get the basics, but once you've got to grips with its intricacies



WORSE THAN

STREET FIGHTER IV



BETTER THAN

KING OF FIGHTERS XII



you'll feel be slam-dunking and showing off.

As well as the arcade mode and versus, there's a bespoke story mode in here. There's a lot of text to clip through as each character has their own story arc, but it goes a fair way in providing context for the characters – if you can be bothered. Anime fans will love it, while the rest of us will be happy to just keep fighting. Regardless, it's easy to appreciate the amount of love that's poured into this.

That sums up the game's production values, really. It runs like a dream with luscious, hand-drawn 2D sprites and varied 3D backgrounds. Give it a go. You might just surprise yourself. **A Paul Taylor**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Stunning graphics, though there's a lot going on that may distract from the fight itself.

SOUND

Surprisingly great voice acting, though there are a few punchables who need silencing.

CONTROLS

The different gauges are initially confusing but everyone understands fireballs and dragon punches.

REPLAY VALUE

The story mode would fill a lazy weekend, but the real longevity comes when you rope a mate into playing too.

VERDICT

Wild, wackier and noisier than everything else on PS3, though it's not for every fighting fan.

8

PlayStation
BRONZE
AWARD



CHARACTER BIOS



RAGNA THE BLOODEDGE

An SS-class Rebel (that's pretty bad-arse), Ragna's reason behind destroying The Library, an organisation set up in the wake of the Ikaruga war, is a secret only he knows.



RACHEL ALUCARD

The head of the Alucard vampire family, she is in Kagutsuchi looking for something to occupy her time.



BANG SHISHIGAMI

A ninja with a high tolerance for pain. He has a massive crush on Litchi Fay-Ling, and although she rebuffs him he keeps trying to win her heart.



JIN KISARAGI

A war hero from the battle of Ikaruga who is Noel Vermillion's commanding officer, he suddenly abandons his post to track down the mysterious Ragna.



TAOKAKA

This mysterious cat-like character is a wannabe vigilante who loves to give people she meets nicknames based on their appearance.



CARL CLOVER

Often referring to the life-size doll, Nirvana, he carries around with him as his 'sister', this top-hat wearing vigilante is hunting Ragna for the bounty.



NOEL VERMILLION

After her commanding officer deserts his post, this lieutenant is sent to Kagutsuchi with her handguns primed to find Jin Kisaragi.



LITCHI FAYE-LING

An ex-scientist, Litchi is now the doctor of Orient Town but is searching for a being known as Arakune.



HAKUMEN

Also known as the "White Knight", he's one of the Six Heroes who helped save the world from being totally destroyed by a creature called the Black Beast.



IRON TAGER.

A giant red cyborg who uses the power of electricity and magnetism to fight opponents, he is also known as the "Red Devil"



ARAKUNE

Once a human, Arakune was caught up in an experiment that went very wrong. He is able to teleport and summon insects to attack.



V-13

A cyborg girl with a split personality, she will destroy any hostiles who threaten her, but is infatuated with Ragna the Bloodedge.

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** RACING | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** SEGA
DEVELOPER: SUMO DIGITAL | **PLAYERS:** 1-4 | **RRP:** \$79.95

SONIC AND SEGA ALL-STARS RACING

They're all in cars. Even the monkey in a ball.

We're not sure what the last kart-racing game of note on PlayStation was. *Crash Team Racing*? *Star Wars Super Bombad Racing*? It's easy to be cynical about games like this. Titles that trot out a company's most/least recognised characters in a half-baked effort, only to suck cash out of the consumer purely based on brand recognition. It's also easy to be surprised by how solid a game like this can be.

Primarily a *Sonic* cast with a few Sega

stalwarts tossed in, like Alex Kidd, Ryo Hazuki from the stalled *Shenmue* series and even those two yellow weirdos from *Bonanza Bros.* this isn't esoteric but we wonder who the younger crowd will care about. The gameplay is ageless and timeless – probably because it's a shameless copy of a certain plumber's racing adventures on another console.

There are weapons and powerups for both offensive and defensive manoeuvres, powerslides mean turbo boosts, and while the

racing's a bit bland in single player there are missions that earn money in order to unlock more of the cast, music and courses to race on. The courses themselves are beautiful and weird, though the layout of some could be a bit tighter.

Splitscreen's supported, and if this ran just a bit more smoothly it'd be pushed well into recommended territory. As it is, it's more than passable but technically marred. If you can forgive that you'll have fun here with a mate or two until *ModNation Racers* hits later this year.

Paul Taylor

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

If this were a lolly it'd give you diabetes in a second. Friendly, bright and very colourful.

SOUND

Die announcer, die. Also, lashings of Sega cock-rock with character quips.

CONTROLS

Easy to pick up and play and very responsive.

REPLAY VALUE

Got mates? Do multiplayer. Plus, the missions should keep you going for a while.

VERDICT

Fun but shallow. Even though it copies from the best it's just missing that crucial spark.

7



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** RPG | **RELEASE:** MARCH | **DISTRIBUTOR:** SEGA
DEVELOPER: TRI-ACE | **PLAYERS:** 1 | **RRP:** \$109.95

RESONANCE OF FATE

Give me a 'J'! An 'R'! 'P'! 'G'!

Maybe it's bad timing or Sega being bold, releasing this when the *Final Fantasy XIII* juggernaut is in full stride? The two are polar opposites, and it's possible that if you hate one you'll love the other.

Resonance's story is fine in theory but the intro movies are completely baffling, and there are more girly men and girly girls here than you might be able to cope with (even though Nolan North features). The fighting system is quite modern, utilising a combination of real-time and turn-based moves – you can run around the battlefield though that reduces your available attack time – plus it has the neat 'tri attack' as its main gimmick.

Your three characters must cross over each other's paths in a certain fashion, preferably surrounding the enemy and then unleashing a near simultaneous thrashing. It's cool when you pull it off and combined with some of the other acrobatics that go on it feels satisfying. Plus, the weapon crafting and exploration system have legs and will stoke your interest.

However, problems cripple this. Battles are random. You're dumped in at the deep

end with little indication of how to do what you're meant to, and when compared to *FFXIII* everything feels so last century. The characters have the same emotion as a corpse. It's not at all streamlined, and graphics are washed out and low-res; it'll take the most hardcore JRPG fan – and we're emphasising the 'J' – to accept this. A pity, as the townships and world are intricately designed. If you like your JRPGs old-school then give this a go. Paul Taylor



FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Ugly graphics and menu system spoil an intricate world. Functional at best.

SOUND

Generic voice acting but fitting grandiose music score.

CONTROLS

After you learn the battle and crafting systems it all clicks.

REPLAY VALUE

The battle system takes a while to get used to, but once you're hooked you may come back for more.

VERDICT

Wordy, clunky, ugly but deep. Hardcore JRPG fans will embrace it; others won't.

6



INFO

FORMAT: PSP | GENRE: SURVIVAL-HORROR | RELEASE: NOW | DISTRIBUTOR: MINDSCAPE
DEVELOPER: KONAMI | PLAYERS: 1 | RRP: \$69.95

SILENT HILL: SHATTERED MEMORIES

Worse than waking up with a tequila hangover

Poor Harry Mason. Dude just can't get a break. He last starred in the PSone classic back in '99 and 10 or so years later he's still trapped in a psychological nightmare. This isn't a remake of the original, but a re-imagining. If you played the original and some of the other games in the series to death you'll find something here to bring you back to the Hill for a few more scares.

The story revolves around the same premise: Harry's crashed his car and must find Cheryl, his seven-year-old daughter while battling a snowstorm in the titular town. All he's armed with is a flashlight and mobile phone that performs as a map and camera. And that's it. No weapons. It means that when the nasties show up, you've just got to run, and at times it feels terrifying.

Psychological stress is a constant, making this quite an 'adult' game. Sure, the monsters are nothing new – we've seen more gruesome stuff elsewhere – but at moments throughout the game you're suddenly in a psychologist's office, answering questions about your fears and sexuality. Depending on your answers the

game changes, though some changes are cosmetic (certain characters dress in a different way) but it pushes the emphasis firmly on the cerebral rather than twitch gunplay.

It looks great on PSP, but we'd recommend the PS2 version, if only for the second stick that controls the flashlight. **Paul Taylor**



➔ "What's a guy gotta kill to get a drink around here?"

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Slick and uncluttered. Occasional slowdown when opening doors as the next area loads.

SOUND

Nightmarish yells coupled with environmental static and eerie silent. Totally atmospheric.

CONTROLS

The PS2 wins here, but otherwise a bunch of QTEs form the basis for running away.

REPLAY VALUE

It's short, but you'd give at least two goes.

VERDICT

Scary without resorting to shock 'boo!' tactics, it's a fine return to form for the series.

8



➔ Puzzle games are impossible to caption. Really



INFO

FORMAT: PSP | GENRE: PUZZLE | RELEASE: NOW | DISTRIBUTOR: MINDSCAPE
DEVELOPER: KONAMI | PLAYERS: 1 | RRP: \$69.95

PUZZLE CHRONICLES

It's a gem

The colour-matching premise has been around for a while and the last game in this series, *Puzzle Quest*, did it remarkably well. Here, you take control of a barbarian who travels across the screen beating the snot out of anything that dares to fight him by demonstrating the power of his manly jewels.

The game screen's divided into two parts; the warrior on top, and the puzzle bit on the bottom. In the puzzle part of the screen, you have to match the different coloured gems into two-by-two squares, and depending on their colour will grant you different abilities to beat your opponent. The better you do, the less room they have to make their moves, so you

have to be quick and also thoughtful in how you're going to achieve your goal. These gems come at you in three groups of three, which you can freely move, so the more room you have to put them where you want, the better.

There's also an RPG element to your antics. As well as making your barbarian stronger (not by turning a Wheel of Pain) you can also train up a pet that is used in battle.

Chronicles runs smoothly, but we just wish we had more room to see what was going on in the gem-filled half of the screen. The animations on top are necessary, but they won't win any awards. Its background music will get stuck in your head so feel free to mute it instead. **Paul Taylor**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

We just wish there was more room to see the puzzle part of the game rather than the barbarian.

SOUND

Leave it on, turn it off. Whatever works for you.

CONTROLS

It's matching colours to other colours. Not too taxing or requiring many twitch muscles.

REPLAY VALUE

The core game is sound, it just doesn't do enough to be considered new.

VERDICT

It'll keep puzzle fiends entertained, but you've been here and done it before.

7



FREE to join
to play

PlayStation
Network

MAKE CHOICES FACE THE CONSEQUENCES

AGGRESSIVE



MA 15+
RESTRICTED

Strong violence,
themes and
sex scene

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PlayStation 3

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ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS

Download this...

AVP MP Demo



We rate this game, and multiplayer is a blast with three very unique models to choose from. The Alien rules these parts.

Heavy Rain Demo



It's critically acclaimed and is like nothing you've played before. Put on your crime-solving hat and see for yourself.

Just Cause 2 Demo



This is a mighty snippet of what to expect. See how much destruction you can wreak before the timer runs out.

Uncharted 2: The Eye of Indra



For about \$5 you get a digital comic and a couple of skins to show off online. A worthy addition for any *Uncharted 2* fan.

Braid



A sublime platformer, it borrows from the classics to make something revolutionary. Get it now.

DLC

ASSASSIN'S CREED II: DLC ROUND UP

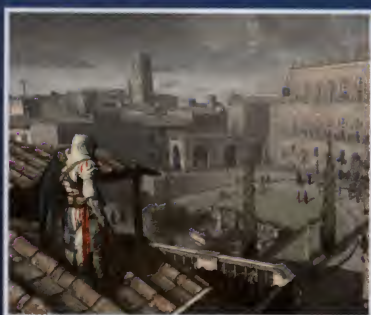
Fight in Forlì and Dampen Vain Bonfires

It's a bit cheeky calling sequence 12 and 13 (The Battle For Forlì and Bonfire of the Vanities respectively) DLC as they were memories/sequences originally intended to be included in *ACII* proper. Still, if you can jump that little hurdle, and really, if you're a fan that shouldn't be too hard, there is definitely some good (albeit brief) fun to be had here.

First up, The Battle For Forlì: set in 1488 just after Ezio has discovered the Apple of Eden. Enter Machiavelli and friends, you all decide the Apple would be safe in Romagna. So off you pop and find the city under attack from the Orsi Brothers.

Cue: six blood-soaked missions where you do that killin' thang you do so well. Also included in this pack is Leonardo da Vinci's flying machine.

This can be used in a mission and just for the hell of it, and being that Romagna is one of the lesser-used maps, is quite a lot of fun. That said the sequence ends on a cliff-hanger and the whole deal could be polished off in an hour or so.



Bonfire of the Vanities: this feels like a much weightier entry. Set in 1497, Ezio has tracked Savonarola to Florence and can now explore the southern province of the city. The missions are double the number in the previous pack (12 as opposed to a measly six) and new 'jumping sprint poles' are on certain buildings, shooting you to greater heights.

There's also the option of getting the extra special edition of Bonfire, which includes more of those *Prince of Persia*-esque/ climbing and exploring sequences and the chance to nab Templar treasure.

VERDICT:

This is really one for the fans. Cheap but brief, this won't change your mind if you thought *ACII* was overrated but is worth it for *Creed* lovers.

INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$6.95
(EACH)/\$11.95 FOR SPECIAL EDITION

DLC

RESIDENT EVIL 5: LOST IN NIGHTMARES DLC

You're dreaming

INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1-2
RRP: \$6.95

A prequel to the main game and a nod to the original that kicked off the horror genre as we know it, you take control of Chris Redfield and Jill Valentine in a mansion belonging to one of Umbrella's senior staff.

It's definitely one for the fans, and it's also pretty short. There are a few moments that will have long time followers chuckling, but it might be lost on those who picked up *RE5* only for the co-op. Regardless, there are bits that add to the *Resi* lore and it's cool seeing Jill in action.



VERDICT:

Adds more to the *RE5* story, though hardcore fans will get the most out of this. It's also a bit short though, so ask yourself if you need to bother.

MULTIPLAYER

ALIENS VS PREDATOR MULTIPLAYER

Fighting with more than harsh language

AVP is a multiplayer powerhouse. The deathmatch mode does what it says on the tin. If you thought the Predator was the king here, nice try at thinking. The Alien dominates deathmatch with its gravity-defiance and pheromone senses. Humans, unfortunately for us, get smashed.

Next up is Infestation. One player starts the match as an Alien Hunter and their task is to kill the Marine prey. When a Marine player is killed they will join the Alien Hunter team and help to kill off any remaining Marines. It's rather amazing how fast the Marine team goes

from being a bunch of cocky swinging dicks to a thinning group of desperate crybabies.

Speaking of crapping your pants, there's Survivor Mode. Survivor allows for up to four players to enter an arena to fight waves of progressively stronger AI aliens. Each arena is set up with two main areas. One will be a platform which is relatively easy to defend; the other will be an area where ambush by aliens is more likely. The catch: they put all the health and ammo out there. Naturally.

If you're after a more stealthy multiplayer game *AVP* offers Predator Hunt. In this mode one player is selected to become the Predator Hunter, the rest of the players take the role of the Marine prey. The Hunter must use the Predator's stealth abilities and advanced equipment to pick off the prey and score points. If a Marine tops the Predator they become him. It's quite addictive, and a nice twist on one versus many.

Next up is Species Death Match. This pits a Marine team, Alien team and Predator team against each other in a race to get the most kills within the set time limit or to reach the



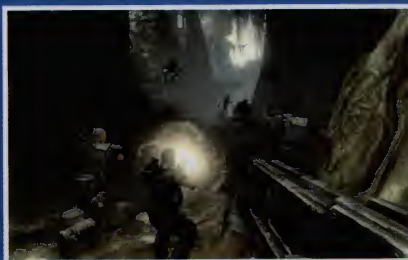
target score before any of the other teams. Once again, this adversarial mode feels fairly unbalanced towards easy Alien victories – so expect it.

VERDICT:

AVP has something for every multi-taste. Species balancing is a tad off; a patch could fix it though. At least people are playing it though.

INFO

GENRE:
SHOOTER
RELEASE:
NOW
DISTRIBUTOR:
SEGA
DEVELOPER:
REBELLION
PLAYERS:
2 - 18
RRP:
\$109.95



MULTIPLAYER

BIOSHOCK 2 MULTIPLAYER

Time to see if blood is thicker than water

INFO

GENRE:
SHOOTER
RELEASE:
NOW
DISTRIBUTOR:
2K
DEVELOPER:
2K MARIN
PLAYERS:
1-8
RRP:
\$109.95



We love it that *BioShock 2* puts the story first in both single player and multi. There's always a context for your actions rather than just tossing a bunch of people in a room with the game's weapons and plasmids and saying 'go for it'. Set at turn of 1959, there's a big party planned to celebrate the new year, and this is where it all goes to hell. After you pick your character, which range from a housewife to an all-star footballer, you're given a bunch of weapons and plasmids to test for Sinclair Solutions and then you're out in to the field.

We were concerned the *BioShock 2* multiplayer could turn out to be a wholesale waste of time, but (when it works), it's a lot of fun. Kills and assists go towards your Adam

total, which dictate how quickly you level up, but you can also become a Big Daddy for massive damage. Taking one down also nets a nice bonus, though it requires teamwork. The maps are pretty squishy, however, and we kept experiencing dropouts after most matches that robbed us of our stats being updated.

A fun diversion, and it shows that story-based multiplayer is possible. Not a patch on the single-player though.

VERDICT:

And as an addition to the *BioShock* package, it's great. It doesn't feel like an afterthought. It's not the reason to buy the game, though.

BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE

Enemy AI making you yawn? Feel like conquering the world? Take your skills online with this trio



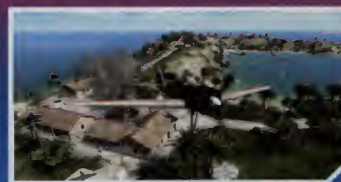
MODERN WARFARE 2

Once you have a good connection, this is an undisputable gem. It keeps on giving, and the pool of quality players keeps growing.



COLIN MCRAE DIRT 2

Take it at face value and this is a load of fun. The netcode's robust, and offers arcade thrills with a simple levelling system.



BATTLEFIELD 1943

Super-addictive and super-easy to drop in to a game. An example of doing things the simple way is sometimes the best.

MASTER MAG

THE DEAD KNOW ONLY ONE THING: IT'S BETTER TO BE ALIVE

The developers of the 256-player (holy crap, that's a lot) First Person Shooter MAG, dropped some survival tips and tactics for it's fans. CJ Heine of Zipper Interactive is here to learn you up good...

BASIC TIPS

For players that are new to MAG, Suppression is one of the first game types they can play – keep these things in mind as you get your feet wet (in other people's blood):

- Wins and losses in Suppression do not count in the Shadow War, but you may also find Suppression missions less stressful because you don't have to worry about impacting the war. Just think of it as a learning environment, with death.
- Remember to stick with your squad. You will improve your survivability while learning how to fight alongside your team.
- There are no vehicles or objectives to repair in Suppression, so modify your loadout appropriately (no need for the Repair Kit or Anti-tank Mines).
- Learn the locations of the Resupply Points as they'll refill your health and ammo, so knowing the way back to these quickly will keep you alive longer. They also tend to be player magnets, and can often become the center of combat.
- Most default loadouts contain a First Aid Kit, so practice using this on yourself when your health gets too low. If you have upgraded to the Medical Kit or have the Resuscitation skill, seek out any wounded allies and try healing them.
- Don't bleed out if you've been killed! Get familiar with the incapacitation and bleedout mechanics in Suppression, and see if there is anyone available to revive you before you choose to respawn. If nobody is around you may consider topping yourself.
- Squad cohesion is important. There are multiple approach routes as an attacker, so talk to and follow your squad leader and steamroll the opposition as a unit.

ADVANCED TIPS

- Go easy on the low level guys! They're in Suppression trying to learn and gain their first few levels. You are all in the same PMC, and taking the time to help them and answer their questions could make the difference down the road in a Shadow War mission.
- Suppression is a great place to experiment with your new skill unlocks. The Suppression missions are small and time to combat is quick, making them a great source for practice targets. Use this closed environment to experiment with things like anti-personnel mines, items from the Electronics skill tree, new weapon upgrades, etc.
- Right on the edge of your next player level but short on time? Often times, it's faster to play a quick Suppression match instead of a full Shadow War mission for that last bit of needed experience.
- On approach as an attacker, drop smoke grenades about 80-100 meters from A or B. This will get your full squad to within striking distance where you can regroup and make the final push to the objective.
- All final C objective buildings have front entrances (attackers) and rear entrances (defender). A few attackers can often flank C towards the back to disrupt the defender's spawn into the final objective building. This provides a critical opportunity to secure the final objective. Ten seconds of spawn wave disruption can often result in an Attacker's victory and some very pissed off opponents.

“Just think of it as a learning environment, with death”

TROPHY HUNTER

Looking for gold, silver, and bronze in your favourite titles? Here are three to grab in *Aliens vs Predator*

LET'S ROCK!

What's that Mr. PlayStation? You want us to kill five enemies with one burst from the smart gun? Why, it'll be our pleasure! Once you receive your very first smart gun, just go straight forward up the stairs and wait until the first (unfortunate) Aliens climb over the wall. Now pull the trigger and don't release until the clip is empty for the Trophy props.

7 THINGS TO DO IN...

ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

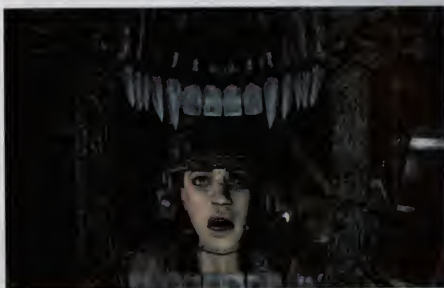
Being that this splattery shooter gives you the option of doing damage as, and indeed *to*, three different species we tried to muster up the grisliest kills we could

ANTHONY O'CONNOR

As Aliens

LITTLE MOUTH INTO FACE

This kill rarely gets old, especially if you pretend the squirming human you're about to obliterate (or perform "mouth sex" on) is an anti-R18+ campaigner. "Try to ban ME will you? Eat my little mouth of doom filthy stinky, hu-man!"



TAIL END OF THE CONVERSATION

You know what, when both the back and front ends of a creature are dead – you know you have an arse-kicking creature! Special thanks go to original Alien designer H.R. Giger, and this human for copping deadily Xenomorph tail.



SWARM THE FLESHBAGS

This is a distinctly multiplayer joy, but swarming a bunch of cocky marines and tearing them apart with just your teeth, claws and tails. So much beauty in the world... makes us want to cry. In a manly way.



As Human



POP GOES THE BIG HEAD

We're not entirely sure it has anything to do with the movies (except, perhaps, the frankly pissweak way the main Alien died in *Alien 3*) but hearing that head pop after you give them a nice dose of flamethrowery goodness made us laugh. Possibly for too long.



AGAINST ALL ODDS

The bridge on the final level, the forest area and various bunkers – there's nothing quite like standing your ground and just firing at the Aliens until you've got nothing left. Sure you'll probably die but it appeals to our inner nihilist. Blaze of glory type stuff.

As Predator



GRAB A HEAD...

Yes, it's a cool move and loads of fun to rip someone's head and partial spinal column out. But you know what's cool to do after that?



... SMASH IT IN!

Stick it with your cool Predator blades until it looks like beef stew with extra thick sauce. Mmmm, that's good goring.




AIN'T GOT TIME TO BLEED

To nab this you'll need to heal or regenerate 30 blocks of health in Survivor mode. Do this in the level 'Mausoleum' as the Aliens come one after another and it is not as crowded as it is in C Block. You should then let the last Alien of the first wave live and hurt you, and use a Stimpack. Pick up additional Stimms and repeat until the Trophy unlocks.



A REAL NASTY HABIT

There's a glitch for this, apparently. Go to multiplayer select 'ranked match', then 'find game'. When you see the 'finding match' message press  to get back to the main menu. Start a new single-player game and all kills you make will earn you multiplayer XP. Note: this exploit may get patched into oblivion. Boo!

INTERMISSION

NEW RELEASES ON DVD & BLU-RAY

THE INFORMANT! (M)

DIRECTOR: STEVEN SODERBERGH **CAST:** MATT DAMON, LUCAS CARROLLY **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD/BLU-RAY

The US government decides to go after an agri-industry giant with a price-fixing accusation, based on the evidence submitted by their star witness, vice president-turned-informant Mark Whitacre (Matt Damon). This is a decent political dark comedy, with the highlight being Damon's performance as a bi-polar sufferer having a meltdown from the pressures of wearing a wire and organising surveillance for the FBI. Scott Bakula also quantum leaps in to great effect as the button-pushing FBI agent, Brian Shepard. Consistently ironic, funny satire.

VERDICT:

Borrows a deadly serious news story and turns it into a behind-the-scenes caper movie. Damon is in control playing the out-of-control undercover executive.

8

IF YOU
LIKE THIS
TRY...

The Insider

Similar premise, different tone – but it rocks



WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE (PG)

DIRECTOR: SPIKE JONZE

CAST: MAX RECORDS, CATHERINE KEENER, MARK RUFFALO, JAMES GANDOLFINI, FOREST WHITAKER

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

An adaptation of Maurice Sendak's classic children's story, where Max, a disobedient little boy sent to bed without his supper, creates his own world – a forest inhabited by ferocious wild creatures that crown Max as their ruler.

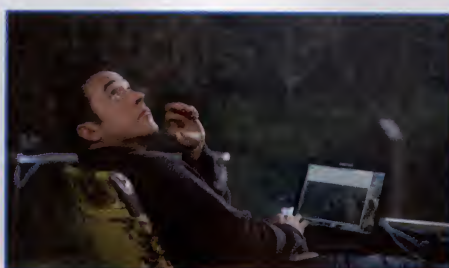
Now, we know what you're thinking; how can a 1963 children's picture book get spun out to a feature length film? We thought the same thing. But it actually turns out to be quite a full ride with imaginative, otherworldly visuals and some superb creature effects on the "Wild Things" themselves.

Its childish visuals are paradoxically mixed with a darker, adult tone though. This may annoy some fans.

VERDICT:

Certainly darker and colder than the source material, but it is also very watchable.

7



2012 (M)

DIRECTOR: ROLAND EMMERICH

CAST: JOHN CUSACK, AMANDA PEET, THANDIE NEWTON, WOODY HARRELSON, DANNY GLOVER

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

From Roland Emmerich, director of *The Day After Tomorrow* and *Independence Day*, comes another "we're all gonna die horribly, yet awesomely" disaster/action-adventure film. Thanks to groundbreaking special effects, the world faces another catastrophe of apocalyptic proportions; cities collapsing, continents crumbling, dogs and cats living in sin, yadda, yadda.

2012 brings an end to the world and tells of the heroic struggle of the survivors in a very paint-by-numbers fashion. You know the drill here; crazily good CGI chaos, a cheese supreme script and a ridiculous premise that goes on for three hours.

It's cringeworthy having to watch decent actors like John Cusack, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Amanda Peet bravely deliver truly absurd lines with utter seriousness.

VERDICT:

Some folks may find this sort of mindless action irresistibly entertaining. We didn't.

3



ASTRO BOY (PG)

DIRECTOR: DAVID BOWERS

CAST: FREDDIE HIGHMORE, KIRSTEN BELL, NICOLAS CAGE, BILL NIGHY, DONALD SUTHERLAND

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

Set in futuristic Metro City, *Astro Boy* is about a young robot with incredible powers created by a brilliant scientist named Tenma (Nicolas Cage). Powered by positive "blue" energy, Astro Boy (Freddie Highmore) is endowed with super strength, X-ray vision, unbelievable speed and the ability to fly. He also has a defensive machine gun located in his arse. Props.

Embarking on a journey to Metro City in search of acceptance, Astro Boy encounters many other colorful characters along the way. None of which are Mike Haggard, unfortunately.

This deviates a bit too much from the original old-school cartoons to please hardcore fans. While it is nowhere near Pixar quality, *Astro Boy* proves sufficient enough to please a new generation of ankle-biters.

VERDICT:

A decent enough reboot that is well recommended to the rugrats.

6



A SERIOUS MAN (M)

DIRECTOR: JOEL COEN, ETHAN COEN

CAST: MICHAEL STUHLBARG, RICHARD KIND, FRED MELAMED, SARI LENNICK

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

The Coen brothers have done it yet again in this imaginative exploration of faith, familial responsibility, delinquent behavior, dental phenomena, academia, mortality, and Judaism - and intersections thereof.

A Serious Man is the story of Larry Gopnik (Michael Stuhlbarg), a physics professor at a quiet Midwestern university, who must deal with an unfaithful wife, a mooching brother, a brat of a son and a teenage daughter who filches money from his wallet in order to save up for a nose job.

Often profound and pitch-perfect with dry wit, Larry's desperate struggle for equilibrium forces him to seek advice from three different rabbis - with mixed success. This is an utterly engrossing film that will have you thinking about it long after the credits have rolled.

VERDICT:

A wonderfully quirky, bleakly comedic and completely enthralling film.

9



BLOOD & BONE (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: BEN RAMSEY

CAST: MICHAEL JAI WHITE, JULIAN SANDS

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

Blood and Bone is the story of a mysterious master-fighter named... wait for it... Isaiah Bone (Michael Jai White). After his release from prison, Bone falls into a mob controlled street fighting ring in the back alleys of Los Angeles.

Marketed as a post-modern Samurai movie, *Blood and Bone* blends the dangerous world of gangster controlled underground mixed martial arts fighting, with a piss-weak plot that attempts to show us how people rolled before "Ultimate" fighting became mainstream.

The fighting is fairly well choreographed though and the film is also of interest to hardcore MMA fans purely due to the hilariously unnecessary cameo list, which is a who's who of MMA celebrities. Interestingly, the story does absolutely nothing to explain Bone's background, motivations, or why he is virtually superhuman.

VERDICT:

The action is fast and fierce enough, but the rest of this is pretty damned mindless.

3



THE INVENTION OF LYING (M)

DIRECTOR: RICKY GERVAIS

CAST: RICKY GERVAIS, JENNIFER GARNER, JASON BATEMAN, ROB LOWE

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

A film hasn't been this high-concept since *Snakes on a Plane*. The film is set in an alternate reality in which no one has ever lied and where people speak their minds, blurting out very blunt remarks and opinions that people in the real world would normally keep to themselves. The concepts of fiction, imagination, and speculation simply do not exist.

Enter Mark Bellison (Gervais), an unsuccessful lecture-film writer who has an epiphany which has him inventing his own web of lies. Using this new ability he decides to woo Anna McDoodles (Jennifer Garner) away from perfect-catch Brad Kessle (Rob Lowe).

This isn't Gervais at his best, but it has its moments.

VERDICT:

Goes all right, for a romcom. The first half hour is hilarious, but it soon tapers off.

6

DIRECTOR: ROEL REINÉ **CAST:** TED DIBIASE JR, TEMUERA MUROMI, JASON **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD/BLU-RAY

THE MARINE 2 (MA15+)

While on temporary leave, Marine and sniper Joe Linwood (WWE Raw Superstar Ted DiBiase), joins his wife Robin (Lara Cox) for a relaxing vacation at a five-star resort on the South Seas. Unfortunately, their holiday soon comes to an end when a group of local rebels seize control of the property and take the billionaire owner and a group of guests and Robin hostage.

Ted DiBiase tries to get his 'John McClane' on, but it's pretty woeful. This film features textbook examples of bad directing and bad acting.

VERDICT:

Just like the scenes depicted in the film, you will feel like you have been taken hostage and beaten about the face with 'Uh-merican' patriotism.

2

**IF YOU
LIKE THIS
TRY...**

The Marine

It was better than *The Marine 2*. Not by much

INTERMISSION

NEW RELEASES ON DVD & BLU-RAY



TOP GEAR 11 (PG)

DIRECTORS: VARIOUS **CAST:** JEREMY CLARKSON, JAMES MAY, RICHARD HAMMOND, THE STIG **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

Tune in to see Jeremy, Richard and James build custom police cars with old bangers, race a Nissan GT-R against the fearsomely efficient Japanese public transport system, put a trio of sub-£1000 Alfa Romeos to a series of harsh tests, conduct a surprising fuel economy exam between a Toyota Prius and a BMW M3 and take on their German rivals. The boys also find time to test the Ferrari 430 Scuderia, Mitsubishi Evo X, Bentley Brooklands, Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black Series and the Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione.

VERDICT:
Still the best TV around, but the worst part is the price. Season 11 was quite short – just six 50-minute episodes. \$49.95 is a little steep if you ask us.

8

IF YOU
LIKE THIS
TRY...

Gran Turismo 5
If it's ever released



DOCTOR WHO: DALEK WAR (PG)

DIRECTORS: PAUL BERNARD, DAVID MALONEY
CAST: JON PERTWEE, ROGER DELGADO, KATY MANNING
AVAILABLE ON: DVD

Compared to the new stuff, '70s-era *Doctor Who* seems like Shakespeare in comparison.

Shakespeare with lasers.

That cuts both ways, of course. The pacing is a lot slower, the costumes and sets are flimsier and less believable, and the actors are always so full of gravitas you'd think they were performing *King Lear* for the Queen. But both the Bard's works and retro British sci-fi have enduring appeal, thanks to their robust story structure and sweeping vision. In this jumbo collection the third Doctor and the squeaky, waif-like damsel Jo Grant match wits with the galaxy's most-dreaded pepper pots, and that quintessential super-villain: The Master.

VERDICT:

Classic retro British sci-fi. *Doctor Who* devotees will lap it up.

8



ALF - SEASON ONE

(TBC)

DIRECTORS: VARIOUS
CAST: PAUL FUSCO, MAX WRIGHT, ANNE SCHEDEEN, ANDREA ELSON, BENJI GREGORY
AVAILABLE ON: DVD

ALF stands for "alien life form," and it becomes the adopted moniker of Gordon Shumway, the last known survivor of the planet Melmac. Shumway crashes his spacecraft into the garage of the Tanner family's suburban home, and is subsequently adopted by them. They must keep him out of the hands of the authorities, however, which means no one can ever know about the alien who lives with the Tanners, giving rise to four years worth of hijinks and jokes about eating cats. In the first season, ALF's exploits include finding employment as a phone salesman for a cosmetics company, going on a date with a blind woman, buying the family a Ferrari after selling his spaceship for parts, and developing amnesia after a blow to the head.

VERDICT:

Not quiet as cool as we remember. Then again, we were all well under 10 years old.

6



ROBIN WILLIAMS - WEAPONS OF SELF DESTRUCTION (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: MARTY CALLNER
CAST: ROBIN WILLIAMS
AVAILABLE ON: DVD

In this comedy special taped at DAR Constitution Hall, his first solo special on the network in seven years, Williams covers such topics as global warming, sex and politics, the state of health care in the country (suggesting a cash for clunkers program for elderly relatives, among other things), drugs – recreational and otherwise – and more personal topics, including his recent heart surgery.

Williams has lost none of his zest since 2002's *Live on Broadway* and his rapid-fire material comes on like a machine gun. Still one of the best comedians in the world today.

VERDICT:

It's hard to believe Williams needs to make shit like *Old Dogs* when he can do this.

8



NABARI NO OU COLLECTION 1 (TBC)

DIRECTOR: KUNIHISA SUGISHIMA

CAST: MITSUKI SAIGA, RIE KUGIMIYA

AVAILABLE ON: DVD

Think of it as *Harry Potter*, only with ninjas. The universe of *Nabari No Ou* is much like our own, only the ninja didn't die out centuries ago. Rather, these secretive clans of hired killers are everywhere, living their ninja lives and doing their ninja deeds unbeknownst to mainstream society. One day a young lad comes along who has been blessed with a game-changing level of cosmic power, and rival underworld factions promptly start scheming on how to seize it for themselves. This leads to melodrama, comic relief, and oodles of over-powered ninja combat, and trace levels of angst.

A modern day ninja conspiracy mega-saga, with abnormally high levels of death and bishi. Frequently entertaining, but a little off-colour.

VERDICT:

If JK Rowling was Japanese she might have thought of this first.

6



NARUTO SHIPPUDEN COLLECTION 01 (TBC)

DIRECTOR: HAYATO DATE

CAST: CHIE NAKAMURA, JUNKO TAKEUCHI, NORIAKI SUGIYAMA

AVAILABLE ON: DVD

Finally, the Time Skip! *Naruto Shippuden* isn't so much a continuation of the original series as a sequel, thanks to the Time Skip: the plot has jumped forwards three years. Naruto is no longer a whiny little 12-year-old. Now he's a taller, more self-assured, and far more randy 15-year-old boy. He's clearly not just on the cusp of adulthood, but close to fulfilling his dream of becoming the strongest ninja in his village. All his old ninja buddies have ramped their power levels too, and it's just as well, because a staggeringly powerful force of terrorist ninjas are now scheming to take over the world.

VERDICT:

A new direction for the most popular anime series in the world. Stacks of insane action.

7



DEATH NOTE RELIGHT 2 - L'S SUCCESSORS (DIRECTOR'S CUT) (TBC)

DIRECTOR: TETSURO ARAKI

CAST: KAPPEI YAMAGUCHI, MAMORU MIYANO

AVAILABLE ON: DVD

Death Note is a brilliant series – easily one of the best anime shows of the 21st Century. But this isn't the best way to enjoy it. In its original form, it was 37 episodes long, and impeccably paced. A slow-burn psychological thriller, it gave ample room for its three-dimensional characters to breathe. In this format... not so much. The second major plot arc has been compressed into under two hours, so the cast barely have time to introduce themselves, let alone explain why they're investigating a serial killer in possession of a magic exercise book.

VERDICT:

A remixed and distilled summary of the second half of the *Death Note* saga.

6

DIRECTOR: JÔJI SHIMURA | **CAST:** ROMI PARK | **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

BLADE OF THE PHANTOM MASTER (M)

IF YOU
LIKE THIS
TRY...

Afro Samurai
More wandering
sword-slingers

Meet Jushin, a wandering samurai/magistrate/assassin/jackass of a man, with the power to summon an army of spectral warriors whenever he feels like it. Usually he'd be using this ungodly power to punish evildoers, but the collapse of the central government has left him little more than a super-powered backpacker with a bad attitude.

VERDICT:

Gory, mindless, bloody, and frequently silly. A shameless straight-to-video samurai gore-fest. Strong on fan service and weak on plausibility.

7

INTERMISS

AT THE CINEMA

KICK ASS (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: MATTHEW VAUGHN **CAST:** AARON JOHNSON, CHLOE MORETZ, NICOLAS CAGE, MARK STRONG **IN CINEMAS:** APRIL 8

Why is it, with the amount of superhero comics and movies, that no-one has actually decided to be a superhero? This is the question posed by highschool student, Dave Lizewski (Johnson), an average dude whose only power is to be invisible to girls. He decides to go in to training and calls himself Kick Ass whilst dressing in the most ridiculous costume. He soon meets a much more dynamic duo who are equipped with proper weapons and with more know-how than he'll ever have.

The plot quickly takes off and makes a couple of

unexpected turns, whilst taking cues from a whole bunch of movies – most obviously *Spider-Man*, *X-Men*, as well as *Kill Bill* – but never diving into spoof-territory or fan-worship, despite being a bit self-indulgent in places.

Kick Ass has the potential to be a smash hit and a cult favourite. It's incredibly funny, and far removed from the staple of comic-book hero movies that have been on our screens lately. There are some glorious fight scenes, and the best have ended up with the pint-sized Hit Girl (Moretz). Also, Nic Cage finally stars in another good movie. We just can't recommend this enough.

THE BUZZ

What's *really* going on behind the scenes

How many times can you flog a dead horse before it limps back to life with undead eyes? Answer: Hollywood times, where 'Hollywood' is a whole number between 1 and infinity. *Nightmare on Elm Street* and *The Karate Kid*, two staples of the '80s that somehow bled sequels into the '90s, are being re-imagined.

The Karate Kid stars Jaden Smith

– Will Smith's son who performed a convincing role in *The Pursuit of Happyness* – as the titular kid (who's actually learning kung-fu), and the ever-youthful Jackie Chan as Mr. Miya... er, Mr. Han.

Nightmare on Elm Street, keeping the high school setting, is going to delve deeper into the psychological make up of Kreuger. We're not sure how much depth there is to a man who's a more psychotic version of Edward Scissorhands.

There's no more or less point in remaking these films than there was, say, *The Italian Job*. But where does the line get drawn? Do you remake *The Terminator*? *Ghostbusters*? *Back To The Future*? It's either going to take a new generation of movie producers to shuffle through or movie goer's wallets to remain closed when these two open.



ALSO IN CINEMAS



THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: NIELS ARDEN OPLEV

CAST: MICHAEL NYQVIST, NOOMI RAPACE,

Based on the first book in the 'Millenium' trilogy by Stieg Larsson, this Swedish film is a murder mystery and psychological thriller laced with tinges of horror. Disgraced columnist Mikael Blomkvist (Nyqvist) is hired by Henrik Vangar to find out what happened to his niece who disappeared 40 years ago. Drawn into the mystery is hacker Lisbeth Salander (Rapace), an experienced hacker whose past leads her into deadly trouble.

Superbly made and acted, this is a thrilling story. While the third act gives far too much away in a short space of time, and there are plausibility holes the size of the moon, it's genuinely tense and at times disturbing – definitely not a date movie. You will come away anticipating the sequel.

THE WOLFMAN

(MA15+)

DIRECTOR: JOE JOHNSTON

CAST: BENICIO DEL TORO, EMILY BLUNT, ANTHONY HOPKINS

A mostly fun werewolf romp with awesome special effects that don't rely purely on CG but rather sticking Benicio Del Toro in a chair for a few hours and applying handfuls of pubes to his face. Feel free to let this pass you by until you see it on the shelf of your local DVD store on a rainy afternoon. Far too uneven and clichéd to be taken seriously. Plus, werewolves are far less cool than zombies and vampires anyway – so we're not sure what all the fuss is about.

SCHOOL'S IN

Qantm College is one of Australia's most successful and innovative creative digital media educators. From its establishment in 1996, Qantm College has become Australia's leading private provider of education to the Creative Digital Media industries. Qantm College educates students across the specialised disciplines of games programming, animation, interactive media, graphic design and special effects.

Qantm College maintains a strong involvement with key industry players, ensuring synergy between college and industry, as well as guaranteeing mutually beneficial outcomes for the student, college and the creative digital media marketplace.

This involvement provides a sound platform from which to educate students and ensure the relevancy of the teaching outcomes, course content and technical infrastructure.

Qantm College provides a supportive teaching environment combined with state-of-the-art resources. This ensures the success of our graduates who are highly sought after within the creative digital media industries.

What makes Qantm the best choice for your digital media career?

Specialised practical lectures –

This is something very few other programs offer, only Qantm gives you the individual practical time you need to grasp the ever increasing skill set required to work with and understand countless technologies and software.

A balance of practical & theory –

You'll benefit from a tried and tested combination of formal theory lectures,

practical workshops, guest lecturers and creative projects.

Accelerated learning – Qantm offers an accelerated learning program in the form of a three-year bachelor degree completed in just two years, or a one-year diploma. You'll learn quickly, graduate and join the industry sooner.

Flexible structure – The course structure allows students to combine fundamental modules with advanced electives that deal with specific areas of specialisation.

At Qantm students are given the opportunity to study without borders: the studies you complete at one Qantm campus can be credited towards further study at any other campus. Qantm courses are your first step towards a rewarding career in the digital media industry!

All Qantm Colleges have fully equipped teaching facilities, animation and multimedia computer workstations and other practical work areas. Qantm facilities are owned by the college and are for the exclusive use of our students. The digital world moves at a rapid pace, and our resources and courses are updated regularly. We ensure students have access to the environment they need to achieve their best and to reach their full potential. We challenge students in ways that bring out their best; some challenges they will enjoy and accomplish with ease; others will build mental and emotional strengths that are essential elements in the growth process and invaluable for future career success. At Qantm, we support, motivate and encourage our students.



Bachelor of Interactive Entertainment majoring in Games Design

Duration: 2-years full-time (3 trimesters per year). Students will undertake a specialised course developed with the help of local industry which focuses on all aspects of the game design process. Students will complement design theory with extensive practical work in the areas of art, scripting, testing, prototyping and serious game development to name but a few.

Areas of Study:

Level Design
Testing
Mechanical Design
Sound Design
Documentation
Authorship
Prototyping
Narrative and
Character Development
Scripting
Asset Development

The local games industry is growing at a rate of 15% per annum and made a considerable contribution to the Australian economy in 2008. Qantm College has strong alliances with some of Australia's and the world's leading games companies including THQ, Pandemic, Krome and Halfbrick.

Bachelor of Interactive Entertainment majoring in Games Programming

Duration: 2-years full-time (3 trimesters per year). Learn C++ programming, work with mathematical functions and artificial intelligence to design and program games for a variety of devices. This program is designed to prepare graduates to undertake operational, development and managerial roles within the interactive entertainment industries. Students opting for major studies in games programming will undertake specialised courses including character development, script writing, games design and agent systems. This degree program focuses on specific areas that are critical to developing knowledge and skills in games programming for interactive entertainment.

Areas of Study:

Games Theory
3D Animation
C++ Programming
Creation of a Games Proposal
Game Title Construction
Game Title Development
Project Management

Games programming requires a keen, problem-solving and mathematically inclined mind. It is a rewarding, well paid and challenging career.



THE BEST PSN GAMES

Buy and play in your home!

BRAID
DEVELOPER: Hothead
PLAYERS: 1



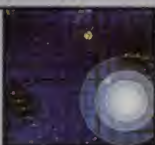
A charming platformer that incorporates one of last decade's most used mechanics – time manipulation – whilst wrapped up in gorgeous graphics. Incredibly addictive and charming as hell, it's made even better when you discover it was all made by one man. Buy it.

WIPEOUT HD
DEVELOPER: SCE
PLAYERS: 1-8



Yes, it's a HD remix of tracks from the PSP versions, but *HD* is too sublime to ignore. Utterly gorgeous, running at a blistering framerate and handles superbly. Mandatory. We may not a fully-fledged, dedicated PS3 version of the series for now, but this will do fine.

EVERYDAY SHOOTER
DEVELOPER: Quesy Games
PLAYERS: 1



Don't be fooled by the sparse art style. This cunningly blends music in with the action that turns it from a dual-stick shooting whimsy into a highly addictive blaster. It's very easy to lose hours and hours to this game as you strive to make it through the tough stages.

FLOWER
DEVELOPER: thatgamecompany
PLAYERS: 1



High concept and totally pretty, it plays like a dream. Guide petals on the wind using the motion-sensing of your DualShock 3. You will be amazed. More than one *OPS* staffer has lost sleep trapped in this game.

MARVEL VS CAPCOM 2
DEVELOPER: Capcom
PLAYERS: 1-2



It's by no means 'straight' *Street Fighter*, and nor should it. Stuffed with 56 characters, this three-on-three brawler is a visual and aural explosion. The HD treatment is superbly done. If you're a fighting nut, you should have this already.

BIONIC COMMANDO REARMED
DEVELOPER: GRIN
PLAYERS: 1



Bionic Commando Rearmed is a prime example of what many love about the PSN: being a platform for updates of classics. It's pure gameplay – and rock hard. We don't know why you'd bother playing the recent remake instead.

SIMPLY THE BEST...

The best of the best of the best of the *best*

ADVENTURE



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

"*GTA/IV* is a game 10 out of 10 was designed for – a game that takes your rising, constantly spiralling expectations and vapourises them with a product so sublime you'll tell your grandkids about it."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar North PUBLISHER: Rockstar PLAYERS: 1-16

10



UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES



"Easily the best PS3 exclusive to date, *Uncharted 2* combines genre-defining visuals, high adventure and cinematic intensity like nothing before. Don't miss the original either. Get both, this second."

DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-12

10



BAYONETTA



"It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy, and weird. It takes skill to make it so well, and it takes a Japanese mindset to make it so freakishly perverted. Smooth and stylish: the ultimate evolution of *Devil May Cry* style action."

DEVELOPER: Platinum Games
PUBLISHER: Sega
PLAYERS: 1

9



ASSASSIN'S CREED II

"A far more compelling story than the revolutionary original, there's more to see and do, and more ways of dealing death than before. Ubisoft has tweaked the climbing mechanic to make it feel part puzzler, but all action."

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft
Montreal PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
PLAYERS: 1

9



MGS4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

"An incredibly layered gaming experience that is almost inexhaustible. One of the best games available on the PlayStation 3, and definitely one of the top exclusives. Buy and play this videogame now. Seriously."

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai
Partners PLAYERS: 1-16

10



HEAVY RAIN



"Kudos to Quantic Dream for continuing to evolve its unique brand of gameplay and storytelling. Compelling, different, addictive – *Heavy Rain* is all of these things. This game will appeal to gamers and non-gamers alike. We just need people to stop telling us it's a revolution."

DEVELOPER: Quantic Dream
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1

8



DANTE'S INFERNO

"What Visceral Games is doing here is living up to its new name. Playing *Dante's Inferno* you get the feeling that nobody at Visceral is holding anything back. To be fair, being too similar to another great game doesn't make *Dante's Inferno* a bad one."

DEVELOPER: Visceral Games
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1

8



FALLOUT 3



"Taking the solid base of *Oblivion* and placing it into a post-apocalyptic wasteland always sounded like a great idea – and *Fallout 3* proves that concept brilliantly. This is a game that will astound you with the sheer depth and enormity of its incredible vision."

DEVELOPER: Bethesda
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1

9



BORDERLANDS

"Borderlands starts out great and only gets better from there. It takes the best elements of RPGs and shooters and fuses them, and it's simply the most rewarding co-op to date."

DEVELOPER: Gearbox PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1-4

9

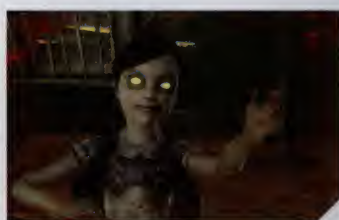


KILLZONE 2

"Visually Killzone 2 runs through the competition like a bull in the proverbial china shop. Lucky then, that the game's design and story matches the lofty production values. Killzone 2 is the first-person shooter evolved."

DEVELOPER: Guerrilla PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-16

10

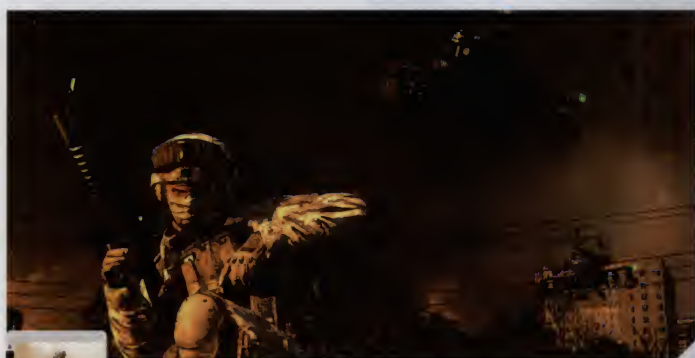


BIOSHOCK 2

"Plot-wise, this doesn't match the original. However, the combat has been spliced to near-perfection. A more than worthy sequel that should easily suck you back under for another tumble."

DEVELOPER: 2K Marin PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1-10

8



MODERN WARFARE 2

"It's almost like three games in one, stuffed with moments that will leave you shocked and breathless with excitement. Superbly crafted, MW2 is, with its older brother, a pinnacle of this generation's games."

DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward PUBLISHER: Activision PLAYERS: 1-18

10



IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY

"It's not an FPS, but shooting is all you do – in the skies above Europe. Head-turning attention to detail and intense action. Awesome, actually."

DEVELOPER: Gaijin Entertainment PUBLISHER: Sega AIE PLAYERS: 1-16

9



ALIENS VS PREDATOR

"Possibly the greatest movie-inspired game ever. This positively oozes atmosphere and is a must for the fans. Wonderfully visualised, incredibly immersive and true to its inspiration."

DEVELOPER: Rebellion PUBLISHER: Sega PLAYERS: 1-4

9



CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

"Superior in many ways to even Modern Warfare, this is a surprisingly superlative piece of software. Powerful, well-produced, stuffed with violence – it's fantastic. The action is relentless, the visuals buttery-smooth, the intensity savage – we love it."

DEVELOPER: Treyarch PUBLISHER: Activision PLAYERS: 1-16

10



GHOST-BUSTERS

"Well-honed and accessible controls, some spectacular visual effects, excellent pace, great level design, incredible attention to detail – all of these essential traits combined with the Ghostbusters universe and come together for a thoroughly addictive experience."

DEVELOPER: Terminal Reality PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-4

9



FAR CRY 2

"At times overstressing itself, Far Cry 2's breath-taking ambition can often be its undoing, but it's still one of the best shooters out there. Plus, setting stuff on fire is still a ridiculous amount of fun."

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal PUBLISHER: Ubisoft PLAYERS: 1-16

8

SHAMELESS VIDEOGAME RIP-OFFS



THE SIMPSONS ROAD RAGE

Thought this one felt exactly like Crazy Taxi? So did Sega – it filed a lawsuit claiming patent infringement. The case was settled out of court.



SRS: STREET RACING SYNDICATE

Eutechnyx is the studio you go to when you want a racing game like Hummer Badlands, or Ford vs. Chevy. SRS tried so hard to be Need for Speed Underground it stung.



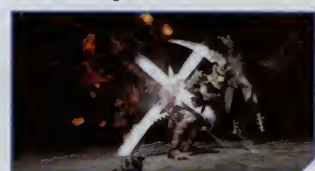
KENSEI: SACRED FIST

This forgotten PSone fighter wasn't the only 3D brawler to try and ape the Tekken series, but it was the only rip-off to also include a Steven Seagal rip-off as a main character. It's a rip-off, within a rip-off.



SAINTS ROW 2

GTA gave us the freedom to misbehave in a huge 3D world, Driver gave us car chases to the third dimension. Saints Row 2 just gave us all the stuff we could already do in GTA: San Andreas again.



DANTE'S INFERNO

God of War didn't invent the slash 'em up, but Dante's Inferno has traced straight over everything the Sony Santa Monica crew ever created. Dante's Inferno is quite good – but it's a direct a lift as you'll find.

THE BEST PSP GAMES

Small system. Big games.

LITTLEBIG PLANET

DEVELOPER: SCE
Cambridge
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1



Retaining all of the fun of one the PS3's most entertaining platformers, this version sacrifices little on the transition to the small screen. Incredibly deep, engaging – and fun.

MH: FREEDOM UNITE

DEVELOPER: Capcom
PUBLISHER: THQ
PLAYERS: 1-4



Monster Hunter is a system seller in native Japan, and it deserves that accolade here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to, and rewards in spades if you're able to put the effort in.

WIPEOUT PULSE

DEVELOPER: SCE
Liverpool
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-8



Its predecessor, *Pure*, laid the groundwork. It's not that this does much that differently, it just does it better. Beautifully animated and weighted just right, it's a futurist's dream come true.

GTA: CHINATOWN WARS

DEVELOPER: Rockstar Leeds
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1



Hilarious. Violent. Addictive. Yes, it's a port of a DS title, but it's a port done right, and still it rebels against the style of other GTA games. A tightly scripted, mature and entertaining package.

MGS: PORTABLE OPS

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions
PUBLISHER: Mindscape
PLAYERS: 1



As a chapter in an epic story that's kept PlayStation fans rapt for more than a decade, this is essential. As an adventure game in its own right, it's bliss. A fine action title, no matter what.

SOULCALIBUR

DEVELOPER: Namco Bandai
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
PLAYERS: 1-2



Yes, it's even better than *Tekken*. Beautiful to look at and easy to pick up and play, it also has *God of War*'s Kratos as a playable character. Brimming with unlockables, it's a classic.

RACING



PURE

"*Pure* shot straight from nowhere to rub *MotorStorm*'s face in its glorious graphics and watertight gameplay. It's not as varied as its main competitor, but damn does it play well."

DEVELOPER: Black Rock **PUBLISHER:** Madman **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9



GRAN TURISMO 5: PROLOGUE

"An anemic game package that somehow survives by being what is quite possibly the greatest example of audio-visual excellence on the PlayStation 3 thus far. Well worth checking out."

DEVELOPER: Polyphony Digital
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

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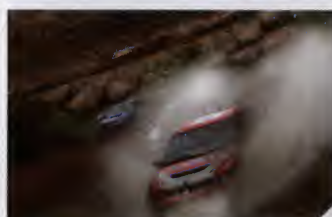


COLIN MCRAE: DIRT

"*DIRT 2* is snazzy, but it's too boneheaded for its own good, has few real rally cars and very little proper rallying. The original *DIRT* remains a far better example of a next gen rally game. More varied and far less US-centric."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9



SEGA RALLY

"To appreciate *Sega Rally* you'll have to continually remind yourself that it's a deceptively life-like caricature of a hardcore rallying experience. Not brain surgery, but it delivers the fun in big muddy spades."

DEVELOPER: Sega Driving Studio **PUBLISHER:** Sega
PLAYERS: 1-6

9



RACE DRIVER GRID

"This bastard rock n' roll son of V8 Supercars and Colin McRae: *DIRT* is hot. Your lower jaw will relax. Your eyelids will take five. And you'll start to drool. Shame it ditched its roots though, and the V8 DLC Codies promised has vanished."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners **PLAYERS:** 1-12

9



NEED FOR SPEED SHIFT

"*SHIFT* bucks the trend of all-American games, and treats you as an intelligent racer. Whether you want to get under the bonnet and tinker, or even just race with what you're given, this truly is a must-have package. It's also damn pretty and very, very noisy."

DEVELOPER: Black Box
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-8

9



MOTORSTORM

"In our humble opinion *MotorStorm* was the best launch title on the fledgling PS3 – and arguably it's one of the greatest launch titles of all time. Defining next-gen racing as a platform upon which smart AI and terrain deformation could thrive, *MotorStorm* reinvented the arcade racer."

DEVELOPER: Evolution Studios
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



MIDNIGHT CLUB: LOS ANGELES

"Within its niche sub-genre, *MC: LA* reigns supreme. Well designed, rolling objectives, and an insane amount of customisation, *MC: LA* manages to rise above the rabble, easily beating off *Need for Speed Undercover* at its own game."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego **PUBLISHER:** Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1-16

7



BURNOUT PARADISE

"You'll lament the thoughtless removal of splitscreen and the lack of a retry button, but you'll marvel at the slick frame rate, the sun drenched city, and Criterion's stellar commitment to free downloadable content. Awesome."

DEVELOPER: Criterion
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

9

MUSIC & SPORTS



ROCK BAND 2

"Rock Band 2 is the best music game around. Import Rock Band and LEGO Rock Band to your hard drive, access the DLC, and you'll have over 1000 songs at your fingertips. You can't fault it."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-8

10



THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND

"From the tunes to screaming hordes of women to psychedelic trips through acid-fuelled imaginations, Harmonix nailed it all. A landmark collaboration."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-4

9



SKATE 2

"Despite some frame rate issues, SKATE 2 is undoubtedly one of the greatest sports games ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense, the balance is sublime. Massively addictive."

DEVELOPER: EA Black Box PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-8

9



FIFA 10

"With its new momentum physics, stellar visuals, and engaging gameplay, 2009 was the year that the FIFA franchise managed to leap the perennial hurdle that is Pro Evolution Soccer. FIFA 10 is even better. Buy it, become obsessed."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-20

9



FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

"A spectacular game. Deeper and more technical, Fight Night Round 4 recreates the sweet science more faithfully than ever before. Remarkable detail, incredible animation."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-2

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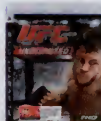


STREET FIGHTER IV

"Capcom has been in the virtual brawling business longer than anyone, and with its vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay, SFIV is worth paying double for. Acquire on sight."

DEVELOPER: Capcom PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2

10



UFC 2009 UNDISPUTED

"It was trumped by Fight Night Round 4, but it's taken the arrival of WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010 to remind us just how tight UFC 2009 really is. A technical, rewarding fighter that looks bloody unreal."

DEVELOPER: Yuke's DISTRIBUTOR: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2

8



VIRTUA TENNIS 2009

"More of a tweak than a brand new experience, Virtua Tennis 2009 is still the most enjoyable tennis game available today. Along with player creation tools, the biggest plus is the chance to play in the Davis Cup."

DEVELOPER: Sumo DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA PLAYERS: 1-4

8



GUITAR HERO METALLICA

"Guitar Hero Metallica improves upon GHWT in a number ways – a more user-friendly HUD, superior presentation and more attention to detail. Great tracklist too, including 'Tuesday's Gone' by Lynyrd Skynyrd."

DEVELOPER: Neversoft DISTRIBUTOR: Activision PLAYERS: 1-4

8



DJ HERO

"A real surprise package, and tough to write off as a gimmick once you've played it. Utterly addictive, and great value when you consider it's chock full of great mixes you'll never hear anywhere else. An excellent game, and great for parties."

DEVELOPER: Freestyle Games DISTRIBUTOR: Activision PLAYERS: 1-2

9

MAGIC MOMENTS



GAME: Ape Escape CONSOLE: PSone YEAR: 1999



THE MOMENT:

Think about the objects you use in your daily life when you're not using your PlayStation. It might be a computer, a mobile phone, microwave. Now, imagine if there was a completely brand new way to use that object. Some type of interface that was completely unlike anything you'd seen before yet gave you so much control you wonder how on earth you functioned as a human before you got it. 13 years ago, the DualShock did just that. And all it took was two bits of plastic to totally open up the gaming landscape.

Driving games were no longer frantic thumb-jumping rumbas from one side of the D-pad to the other. That left thumbstick was blessed with a full 360 degrees of movement that meant it wasn't just full lock, or on and off, run or stand still in games – and those that did need those deft touches were hampered with a specific button to hold to achieve the desired result. There was even a game made specifically for the controller – Ape Escape.

Action wasn't dictated by the face buttons, as you needed to move your character with the left stick and manipulate the object you held – a net, a radar, an RC car – with the right. It was revolutionary, as you had to walk slowly up to an ape and swipe it at the same time, or try and track it down with the radar by carefully rotating the right stick. The object that broke those rules was the rowboat, as the left stick was no longer a method of moving your character, but had to be used in tandem with the right to get across water. It took practise to get things going elegantly, but once mastered it was possible to do slow turns, paddle furiously or leisurely.

It was revolutionary. Nothing has made such an impact since. 3D gaming, motion controls: you have a lot of work to do.



1998

BUSHIDO BLADE

Home of the nice slice

There was a time, before the *Final Fantasy* mainstream cash-cow, when Square had balls. The year was 1998, and the game that proved its testesatchel status was *Bushido Blade*. Sure it had the beginnings of Squenix effeminacy in it (the selectable characters wore questionable outfits and had seriously over-gelled hair) but these were questionably dressed, gel fiends that murdered one another with razor-sharp katanas.

Bushido Blade was unlike any other 3D

“...then make a crazy, last-ditch effort stab you in the throat”

“POV action” is one dodgy Google search



fighter at the time, and unlike any other fighter released since – and yes, we’re deliberately ignoring its diluted sequel, *Bushido Blade 2*, and the ‘meh’ spiritual successor *Kengo*. The original concept was simple; a one-on-one sword-based fighting game where one decent strike to a major part of your enemies body – like, his melon, for example – would earn him instant death.

You can only imagine how tense a match was. The game featured eight weapons to choose from including katana, nodachi, long sword, saber, broadsword, naginata, rapier, and sledgehammer. Yes, ‘sledgehammer’. Each of these weapons had a realistic weight and length, giving every one of them different power, speed, and block capabilities. Combine this with a variety of attack combinations executed from one of three stances – plus the fact that each of the characters had unique predispositions towards certain weapons – and you had one of the most tactical fighting games ever fashioned by the hand of man in Japan.

In addition to the game’s single-player story mode (which didn’t make a lick of sense, narrative-wise), *Bushido Blade* had a practice mode, a Slash Mode (which had you facing 100 ninjas one after the other), and a two player multiplayer mode. The latter diversion could be single screen or, if you were one of the three people in the world who bought one, you could use the PlayStation link cable to hook up two televisions. If you did that you could access ‘POV mode’, which is something that is quite a bit better than it sounds. POV stood for ‘Point of View’ (not an impoverished person) and it allowed you to duke it out by looking through



the eyes of your character.

Bushido Blade’s multiplayer was slashtacular. But the coolness not only revolved around scoring a one-hit victory; you could also wound people grievously. A tap to the arm made it hang at your side uselessly, a fair chop to a leg would force your enemy to hobble around the stage after you. Realistically, your opponent had two options left after that: hit – at which point you’d chop his head off for free, or he could attempt to blind you by throwing dirt in your face and then make a crazy, last-ditch effort to stab you in the throat.

Honestly, how can you not appreciate a game like that? Furthermore, how the hell did a concept this ingenious ever go the way of the dodo? It’s dishonourable. **Adam Mathew**



INFO

CONSOLE: PLAYSTATION
GENRE: FIGHTING
DEVELOPER: LIGHT-WEIGHT
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN
CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: \$20



MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS

There’s one *Bushido Blade* character we’ll never forget about: Cheapy McCheap (real name: ‘Schuvalt Katze’). We’re not sure who faxed this guy the RSVP to the fight, but whoever did forgot to add in the following rule: ‘Bringing a gun to the sword fight isn’t cool – so don’t do it’. Armed with a pistol, Katze is a hitman who can kill you instantly with a long-range attack, putting him at a *slight* advantage. Using him in VS mode against a beginner player is super sadistic fun though.



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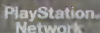
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BUT DO YOU HAVE WHAT
IT TAKES TO LEAD?**

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The logo for the magazine 'MAG' is displayed in a large, bold, metallic font. The letters are three-dimensional and appear to be made of a dark, reflective material like metal or polished stone. The 'M' and 'A' are connected, and the 'G' is slightly separated. The logo is set against a dark, textured background that looks like a wall or a large piece of paper.

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